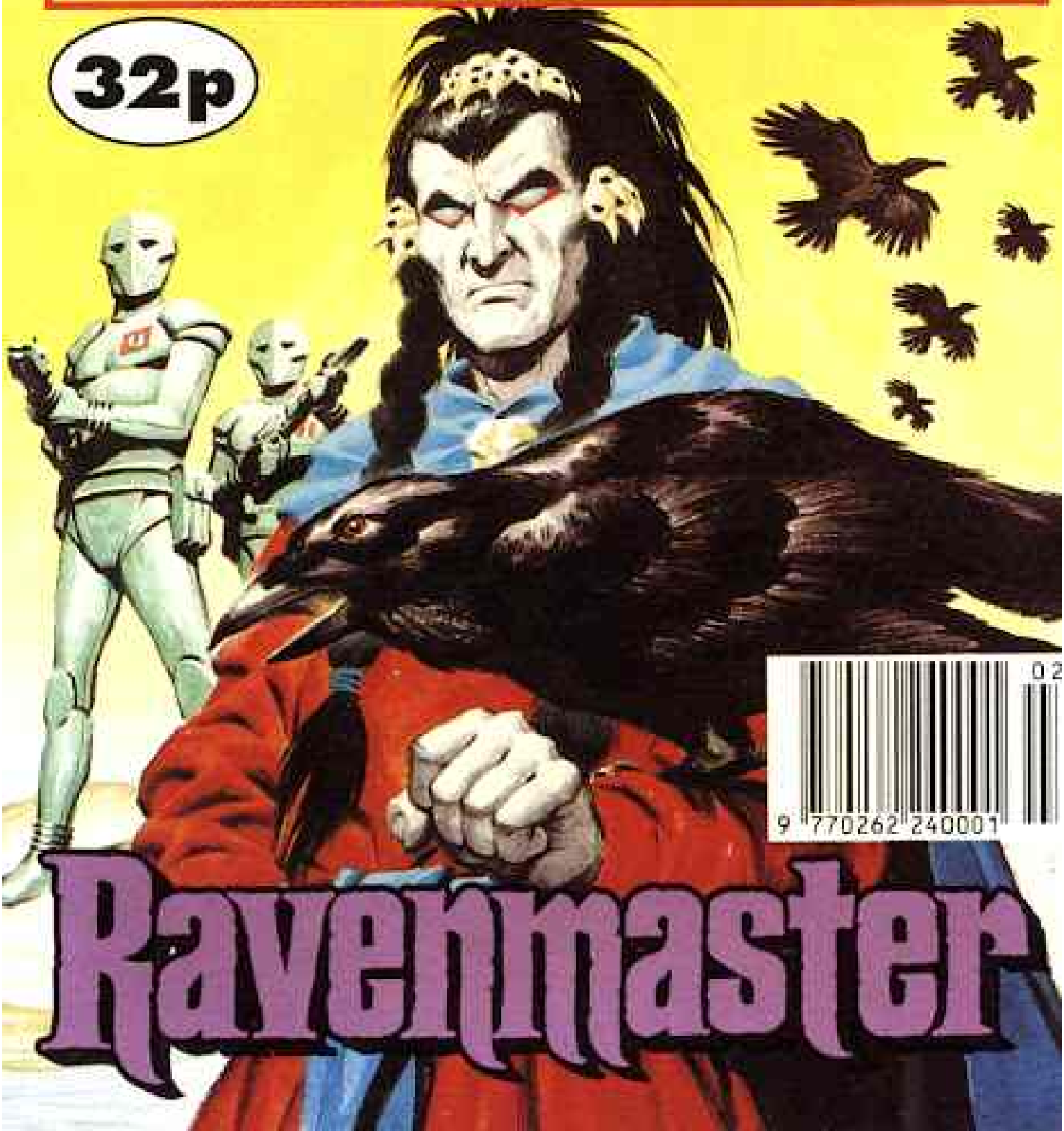
STARBLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 257

32p



Ravenmaster

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We at "Starblazer" want to bring you the very best in Fantasy Fiction. To do that we need *your* help.

So that we can produce the kind of stories you want to read, please fill in the questionnaire on this page and send it to "Starblazer", D. C. Thomson & Co. Ltd., 185 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2HS.

If you don't want to cut your issue of "Starblazer", you can copy the questionnaire onto a sheet of paper.

And there's a chance to win a full-colour print of one of our new-style wraparound covers!

The senders of the ten letters which we judge to be the most informative will each receive one of the prints. We want to hear from you NOW!

Name ..... **Age** .....

Address .....

What kind of science fiction do you most enjoy? Please tick appropriate boxes. If you dislike any type of story, place a cross in the box.

SUPERHEROES	☐	☐	**FANTASY**
DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS	☐	☐	**SWORD AND SORCERY**
POST HOLOCAUST	☐	☐	**HORROR**
ADVENTURE	☐	☐	**STAR WARS**
HUMOUR	☐	☐	**DR. WHO**
			MYSTERY

Where do you normally buy your STARBLAZER? _____

_____

Which is your favourite STARBLAZER story? _____

_____

Which is your favourite character? _____

Which is your favourite science fiction movie? _____

_____

Have you any comments to make about STARBLAZER... good or bad? _____

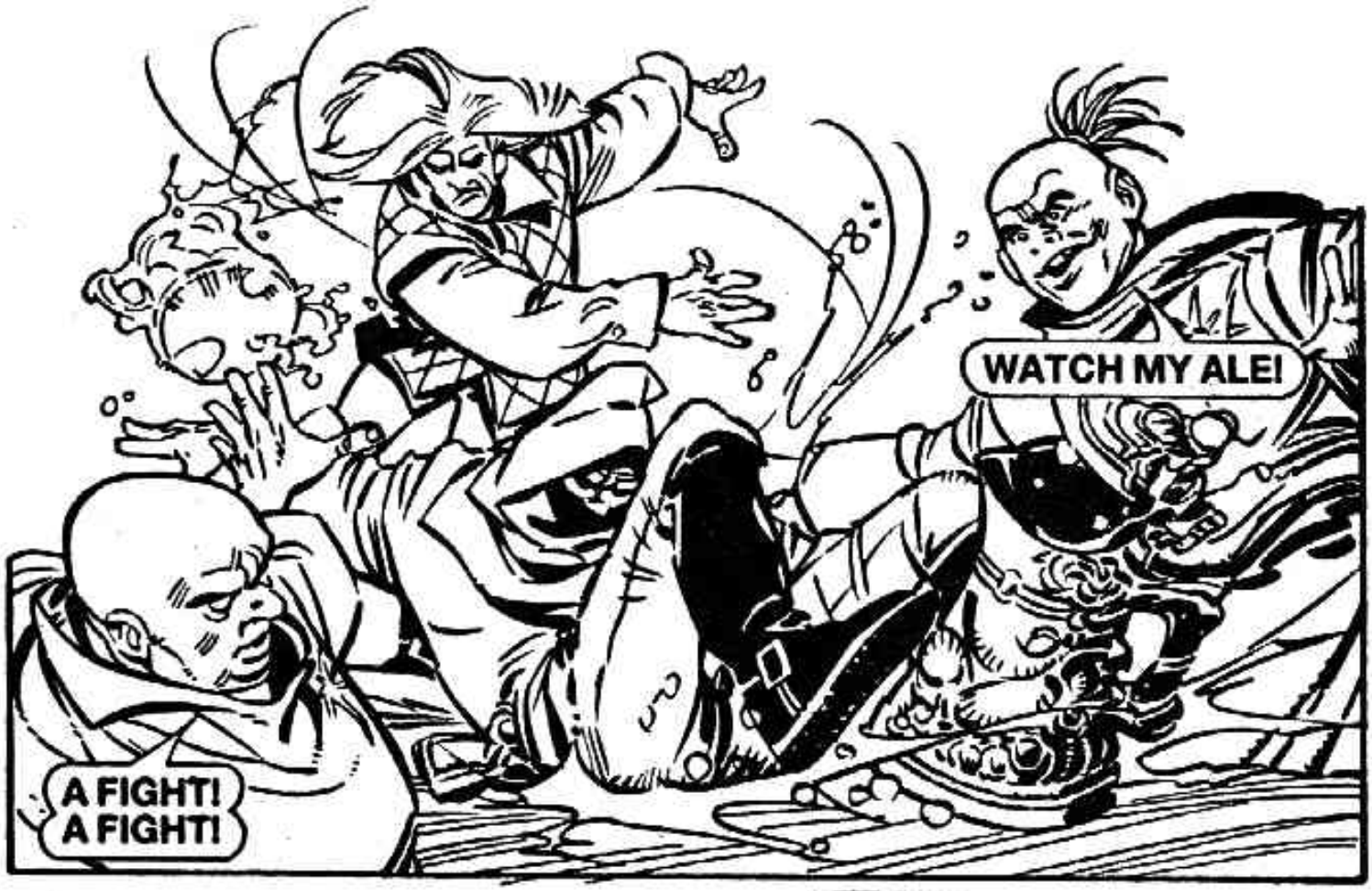
_____

RAVENMASTER

THE IDYLLIC CATHEDRAL TOWN OF ICONFORD IS A PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE FOR MANY WHO DWELL IN THE SEVEN REALMS. FOOTSORE TRAVELLERS FIND REST IN ITS EXCELLENT HOSTELRIES, WHERE THEY CAN PARTAKE OF MULLED WINES AND CIDERS WHILE LISTENING TO THE VERY LATEST IN MINSTREL ENTERTAINMENT.

A SILVER CROWN IF YOU PLAY 'THE PROUD KESTREL', BARD.
SORRY PILGRIM, I CANNOT. IT WAS A FAVOURITE OF A FRIEND OF MINE JUST RECENTLY SLAIN.

PLAY IT!
UURRK! NEVER! I WON'T SULLY HIS MEMORY BY PLAYING IT FOR YOU, WORTHLESS VAGABOND!


WATCH MY ALE!
A FIGHT! A FIGHT!

NO ONE CALLS ROMIC REAPSILVER A WORTHLESS VAGABOND AND GETS AWAY WITH IT! NO ONE EXCEPT YOU, TEAL!
ROMIC! BY THE SUN-LORD! YOU'RE ALIVE! BUT HOW? WHEN THE PORTCULLIS TRAP SEPARATED US AND THE THORN BEASTS FELL ON YOU, I THOUGHT YOU'D JOINED YOUR ANCESTORS.

YES, YOU DEMONSTRATED THAT BY RUNNING AWAY AND LEAVING ME THERE. BUT DON'T WORRY, I'VE FORGIVEN YOU REALLY — I JUST WANTED TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE FRIGHT!
LITTLE?

THIS IS THE MAN WHO STARTED IT, SERGEANT. HE TRIED TO STRANGLE MY BARD.
IT WAS MERELY A JAPE, OFFICER. — AT WORST A COMMENT ON HIS SINGING.
I'M AFRAID SUCH BEHAVIOUR ISN'T PERMITTED IN ICONFORD, SIR. PERHAPS A NIGHT IN THE GARRISON GAOL WILL CURB YOUR BOISTEROUS SPIRIT.
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE, SIR. YOU'VE COMMITTED NO CRIME.
IF HE GOES, I GO WITH HIM.

WILL THAT DO?
CRUNCH!

QUITE ADEQUATE! IT'S THE CELLS FOR YOU!

AND SO IN THE CELLS—
. . . SO THEY STUNG ME ALL OVER, PARALYSING ME WITH THAT EVIL VENOM OF THEIRS, THEN CARRIED ME BACK TO LET THEIR BROOD FEED ON ME. IT WAS JUST BLIND LUCK THAT A TRIO OF PALADINS FOUND ME.
WELL, I MISSED YOU WHILE YOU WERE GONE — NOW YOU'RE BACK I'M EXPECTING THE USUAL QUOTA OF WANTON VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION THAT NORMALLY FOLLOWS IN YOUR WAKE.

MEANWHILE, AT THE GARRISON WATCHTOWER.
THERE'S A MIGHTY STORM BREWING UP, MY FRIEND.
IT'S LIKE NOTHING I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE! THAT SOUND, IT'S ALMOST LIKE THE BEATING OF . . .

. . . WINGS!
HELP ME!
CAW

BACK AT THE INN CLOSING TIME NEARED. WEARINESS ONLY SERVED TO SHARPEN KYRA THE LANDLADY'S ACID REPARTEE.
HEY, KYRA! HOW ABOUT A FREE DRINK AND A KISS FOR A HOLYMAN WHO'S PARCHED FROM TRAVELLING?
HOLYMAN? PAH! YOU PILGRIMS ARE ALL THE SAME — TWO MINUTES IN A CATHEDRAL LOOKING AT THE RELICS AND FOUR DAYS CLUTTERING UP MY TAVERN!

BUT KYRA'S TONGUE SOON UTTERED A FEARSOME CRY —
NOOOO!

AT THE GARRISON, PREPARATIONS WERE MADE TO REPULSE THE WEIRD INVADERS . . .
USE THOSE TORCHES TO KEEP THE CARRION-EATERS AT BAY.

SIR! THE STATUE OF THE SUN-LORD . . .
HEAVEN HELP US ALL! IT'S COVERED IN RAVENS.

NOOOOOO!

A SOLITARY FIGURE APPROACHED KONFORD CATHEDRAL. HE WAS THE RAVENMASTER, AND THE TERROR THIS NIGHT WAS HIS DOING.

HALT! YOU MUST NOT DEFILE THIS CHAMBER.
IS THAT SO!

AGE . . .
. . . WITHER . . .
. . . DIE!

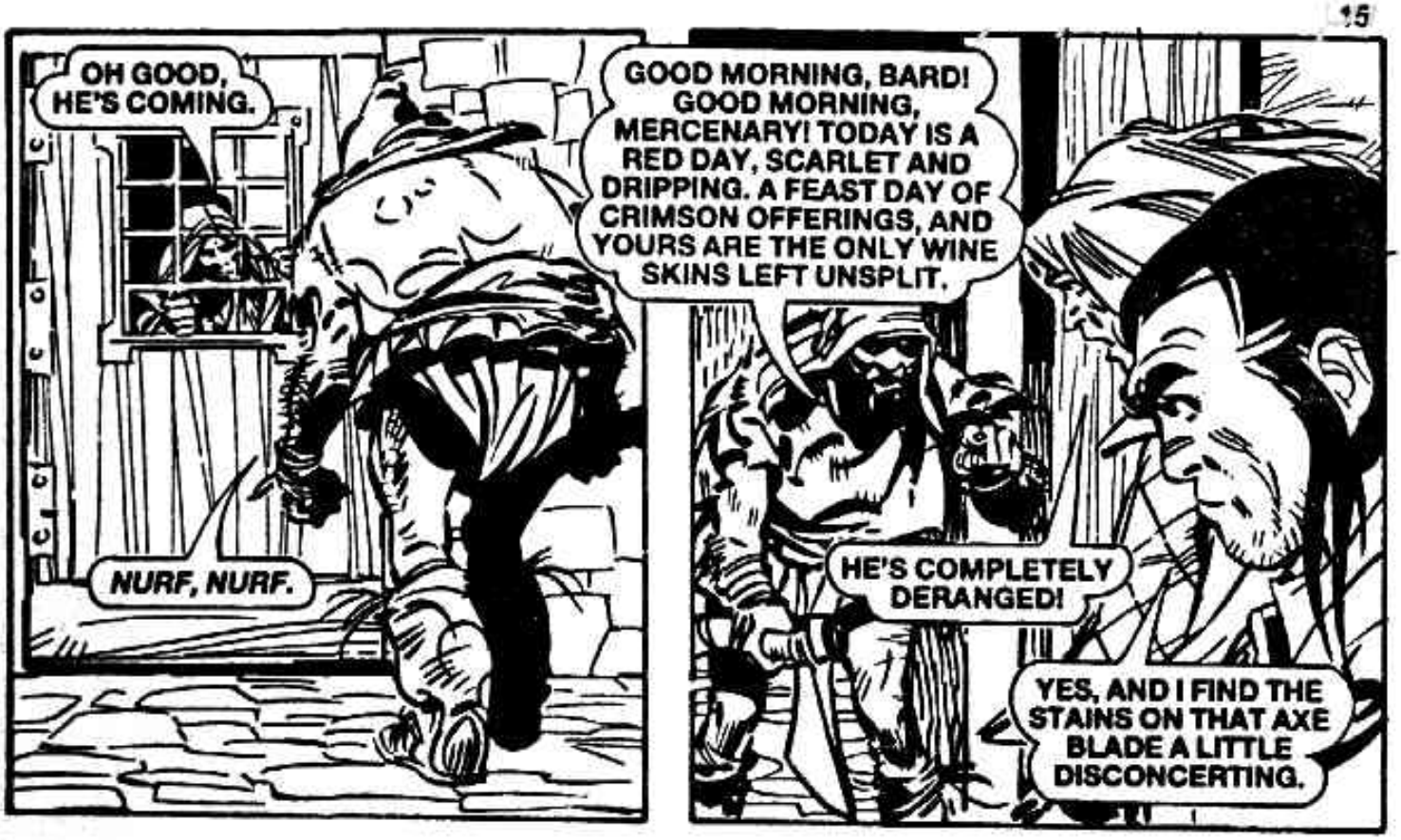
WAIT! THIS IS THE HOUSE OF THE SUN-LORD! YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS A DESECRATION AND A SIN.
MY DEAR ARCHBISHOP, FORGIVE ME!

I BURN WITH THE MOST DREADFUL SINS.
AAARGH

THE ANCIENT ICONFORD SCROLLS, THE MOST SACRED AND COMPLETE SET OF MAGICAL WRITINGS IN THE SEVEN REALMS. DOES ANYONE MIND IF I BORROW THEM FOR A WHILE? NO? GOOD, I THOUGHT NOT.

HA! HA! HA!

LATE THE NEXT MORNING —
HEY, GAOLER! HOW ABOUT SOME BREAKFAST IN HERE? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ABOUT US?


OH GOOD, HE'S COMING.
NURF, NURF.
GOOD MORNING, BARD! GOOD MORNING, MERCENARY! TODAY IS A RED DAY, SCARLET AND DRIPPING. A FEAST DAY OF CRIMSON OFFERINGS, AND YOURS ARE THE ONLY WINE SKINS LEFT UNSPLIT.
HE'S COMPLETELY DERANGED!
YES, AND I FIND THE STAINS ON THAT AXE BLADE A LITTLE DISCONCERTING.

IF I CAN JUST PULL THIS TOY FROM HIS GRIP WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DANCE OUT OF HERE UNBLEMISHED.
HUNNNH!

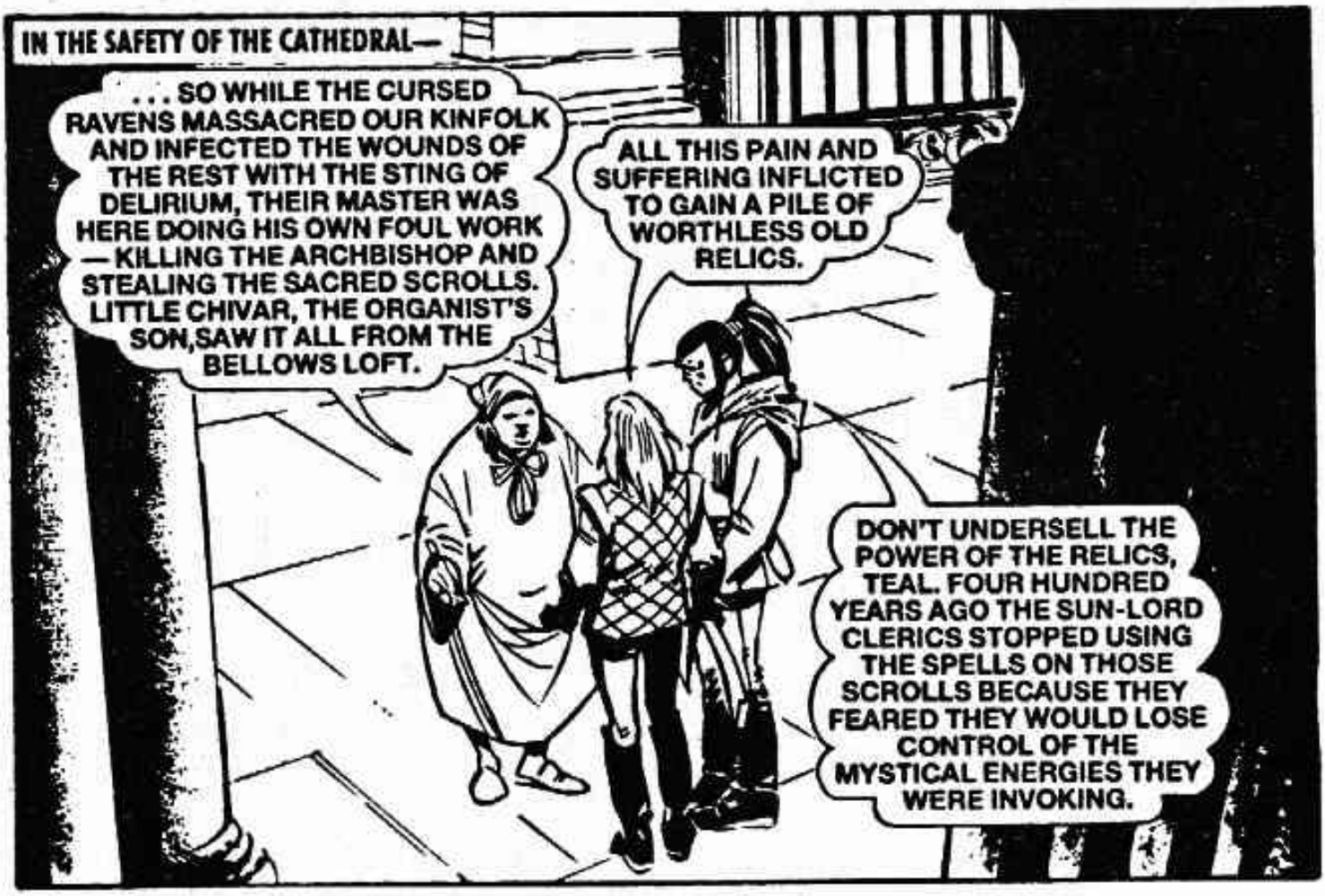
I'D FORGOTTEN WHAT A GOOD TEAM WE MAKE, MINSTREL.
Y'KNOW, MERCENARY, THIS SORT OF THING DOESN'T HAPPEN TO ME WHEN YOU'RE NOT AROUND — I THINK BAD LUCK MUST RUB OFF.

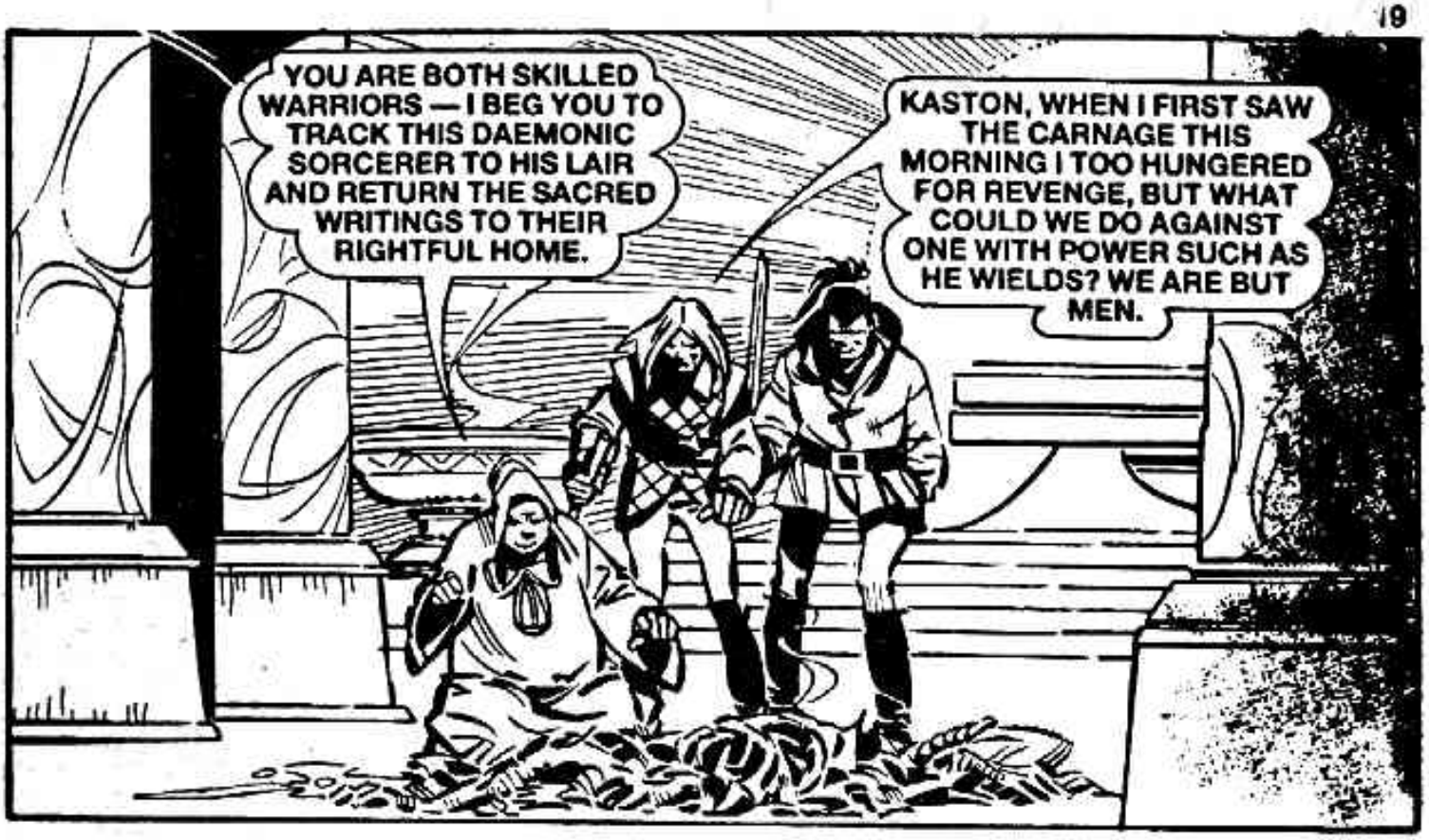
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, I'M ONE OF THE LUCKIEST MEN ALIVE. REMEMBER THAT MELVIDIAN WORM TORTURE? ONLY TWO OTHER PEOPLE HAVE SURVIVED THAT.
LUCKY PEOPLE DON'T GET TORTURED BY THE MEL . . . YOU'D BETTER LOOK AT THIS.
I NEED A SWORD!

WHILE WE WERE LOCKED UP DISCUSSING OLD TIMES, SOMETHING CAME ALONG AND RIPPED THE LIVING HEART FROM MY HOMETOWN. I'LL TELL YOU NOW, ROMIC, WHATEVER DID THIS IS GOING TO PAY.
CONTROL YOUR RAGE, MY FRIEND, AT LEAST UNTIL WE HAVE LEARNED THE CAUSE OF THIS MADNESS.

TEAL! TEAL! ARE YOU UNHARMED, MY SON?
MAYOR KASTON! WE'RE SAFE BUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE? WE WERE LOCKED IN THE GARRISON CELL LAST NIGHT, AND THE SIGHTS THAT SHOCK MY EYES THIS MORNING MAKE ME WONDER IF I STILL LIE THERE DREAMING.

COME WITH ME TO THE CATHEDRAL AND I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING I KNOW. QUICKLY NOW! THE MOB MAY TURN ON US IF WE DRAW ITS ATTENTION.


IN THE SAFETY OF THE CATHEDRAL—
. . . SO WHILE THE CURSED RAVENS MASSACRED OUR KINFOLK AND INFECTED THE WOUNDS OF THE REST WITH THE STING OF DELIRIUM, THEIR MASTER WAS HERE DOING HIS OWN FOUL WORK — KILLING THE ARCHBISHOP AND STEALING THE SACRED SCROLLS. LITTLE CHIVAR, THE ORGANIST'S SON, SAW IT ALL FROM THE BELLOWS LOFT.
ALL THIS PAIN AND SUFFERING INFLICTED TO GAIN A PILE OF WORTHLESS OLD RELICS.
DON'T UNDERSELL THE POWER OF THE RELICS, TEAL. FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO THE SUN-LORD CLERICS STOPPED USING THE SPELLS ON THOSE SCROLLS BECAUSE THEY FEARED THEY WOULD LOSE CONTROL OF THE MYSTICAL ENERGIES THEY WERE INVOKING.


YOU ARE BOTH SKILLED WARRIORS — I BEG YOU TO TRACK THIS DAEMONIC SORCERER TO HIS LAIR AND RETURN THE SACRED WRITINGS TO THEIR RIGHTFUL HOME.
KASTON, WHEN I FIRST SAW THE CARNAGE THIS MORNING I TOO HUNGERED FOR REVENGE, BUT WHAT COULD WE DO AGAINST ONE WITH POWER SUCH AS HE WIELDS? WE ARE BUT MEN.

YOU'RE A MERCENARY, ROMIC. ISN'T THAT WHY THEY CALL YOU 'REAPSILVER'? WELL, WHEN YOU SEE WHAT FILLS THE FOUNDATIONS OF THIS CATHEDRAL YOU MAY CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT MY REQUEST.

THE HOARD OF LUKASH, LOOTED BY THE INVICTAN PALADINS OVER FIVE DECADES AGO. THEY LEFT THE TREASURE HERE AT ICONFORD.
IT'S UNBELIEVABLE! ALL THAT WEALTH!

FIND THE SORCERER, AND IT'S YOURS.
WE'LL DO IT!
ROMIC!

ALL THE GOLD IN THE WORLD CAN'T BUY US PROTECTION FROM OUR ADVERSARY'S MAGIC. HE'LL STRIKE US DOWN IN AN INSTANT WITH ONE OF HIS SPELLS.

NO, TEAL, THERE IS A WAY. SAINT EVEUTHIAN'S ARMOUR STILL RESIDES IN THE VESTRY. CLAD IN THAT, A WORTHY MAN MIGHT DEFEAT THE NECROMANCER.

BARDS WILL SING BALLADS ABOUT YOU IN THEIR TAVERNS . . .

TAVERNS . . . KYRA SHUT UP! WHERE'S KYRA? I MUST FIND OUT IF SHE'S ALIVE BEFORE WE GO.

TEAL RETURNED TO THE TAVERN—

KYRA, IT'S TEAL, DON'T BE AFRAID.

TEAL? HAVE YOU COME TO MOCK ME TOO? IF NOT, THEN TELL ME HOW THE VOICES OF FRIENDS CAN SO SOON BE FILLED WITH HATRED AND CRUELTY, HOW THE EYES OF STRANGERS CAN BURN SO MUCH WITH MADNESS THAT EVEN I CAN SEE THEIR FLAME.

CHEW ON THESE MULLING CLOVES, THEY MAY SERVE TO NUMB THE PAIN AND KEEP THE FEVER AT BAY.
I HAVE DONE SO ALREADY — PERHAPS THAT IS WHY I HAVE REMAINED SANE.
ROMIC WISHES TO LEAVE NOW.

LOOK AFTER HER FOR ME.
OF COURSE! WE RAIDED THE MUSEUM. THERE ARE A FEW THINGS IN HERE THAT YOU MIGHT FIND USEFUL . . . SLING, PHIALS OF HOLY WATER, THAT SORT OF STUFF.

THIS IS A QUESTING COMPASS. I FOUND IT IN THE MUSEUM. KASTON HAS SET IT TO TRACK OUR SORCERER.
RIGHT, LET'S GET ON WITH IT THEN.

THE TWO MEN FOLLOWED THE COMPASS NEEDLE NORTH EAST FOR MOST OF THE DAY—
WE'VE REACHED THE OLD BORDER BETWEEN THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN REALMS — MANY A LIFE WAS WASTED HERE FOR AN EXTRA FEW ACRES OF LAND. BORDER PATROLS SKIRMISHED HERE AGAIN AND AGAIN. YOU CAN ALMOST HEAR THE CLANG OF STEEL ON STEEL.
THE ONE WE SEEK PASSED THROUGH HERE — NOT FLYING, BUT ON FOOT. SURELY HE DIDN'T TIRE OF USING HIS MAGIC.

ROMIC AND TEAL WANDERED AMONG THE STRANGE STANDING STONES—
WAIT! A GLYPH!
A WHAT? WHERE?

IT'S A WAY OF STORING A SPELL. THE MAGIC IS ONLY TRIGGERED WHEN A PREDETERMINED SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES COMES TO PASS, AND THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT BE.
THERE'S NO TELLING HOW OLD THIS GLYPH IS. ITS POWER COULD HAVE BEEN SPENT MONTHS AGO.

WHOOOOSH!
OH, NO!
ZAP
ENERGY SNAKED FROM THE GLYPH AND DRILLED INTO THE EARTH AS SUDDENLY AS SUMMER LIGHTNING.

PFAH! THE STENCH! THE GLYPH IS RAISING THE DEAD! RUN FOR IT, WHILE I HOLD THEM OFF.
STOP TRYING TO BE A HERO AND FOLLOW ME!

BUT FROM THE GROUND ROSE A LONG-DEAD KNIGHT —
SUN-LORD, PRESERVE US!

WORRY NOT, SOLDIERS! YOUR ETERNAL REST IS ONLY TEMPORARILY DISTURBED — I WILL SOON DESPATCH YOU BACK TO IT.
THE HEART OF BATTLE IS NO PLACE FOR A SOFT SKINNED SOUL LIKE ME. CHANCES ARE, I'LL BE MORE USE TO ROMIC OUTSIDE THE FRAY — BESIDES, THE WAY HE SWINGS THAT MACE I COULD HARDLY STAND NEXT TO HIM.

GOT ONE!
THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM!

YARRRR!
NO TIME TO LOAD THE SLING AGAIN, WHAT ABOUT . . .

NAY!
HOLY WATER!

KEEP MOVING. I DON'T THINK THAT THE GLYPH WILL BE ABLE TO ANIMATE THEM BEYOND THE CONFINES OF THE RAVINE.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT!

STOP!

I WAS RIGHT. THEY CAN FOLLOW US NO FURTHER, THANK THE SUN-LORD. I ONLY PRAY THAT THEY ARE NOT WAITING FOR US WHEN WE RETURN THIS WAY.

THAT'S A WARLOCK'S RING BEHIND US. A GOOD PLACE TO CAMP FOR THE NIGHT. THEY SAY THE STONES KEEP THE EVIL SPIRITS AT BAY.

NOOOOO!

YAAAAAH!

YOUR WRIST . . . LET ME ATTEND TO IT.
DON'T FRET, I'LL LIVE — I'M NOT A CRYBABY LIKE YOU.

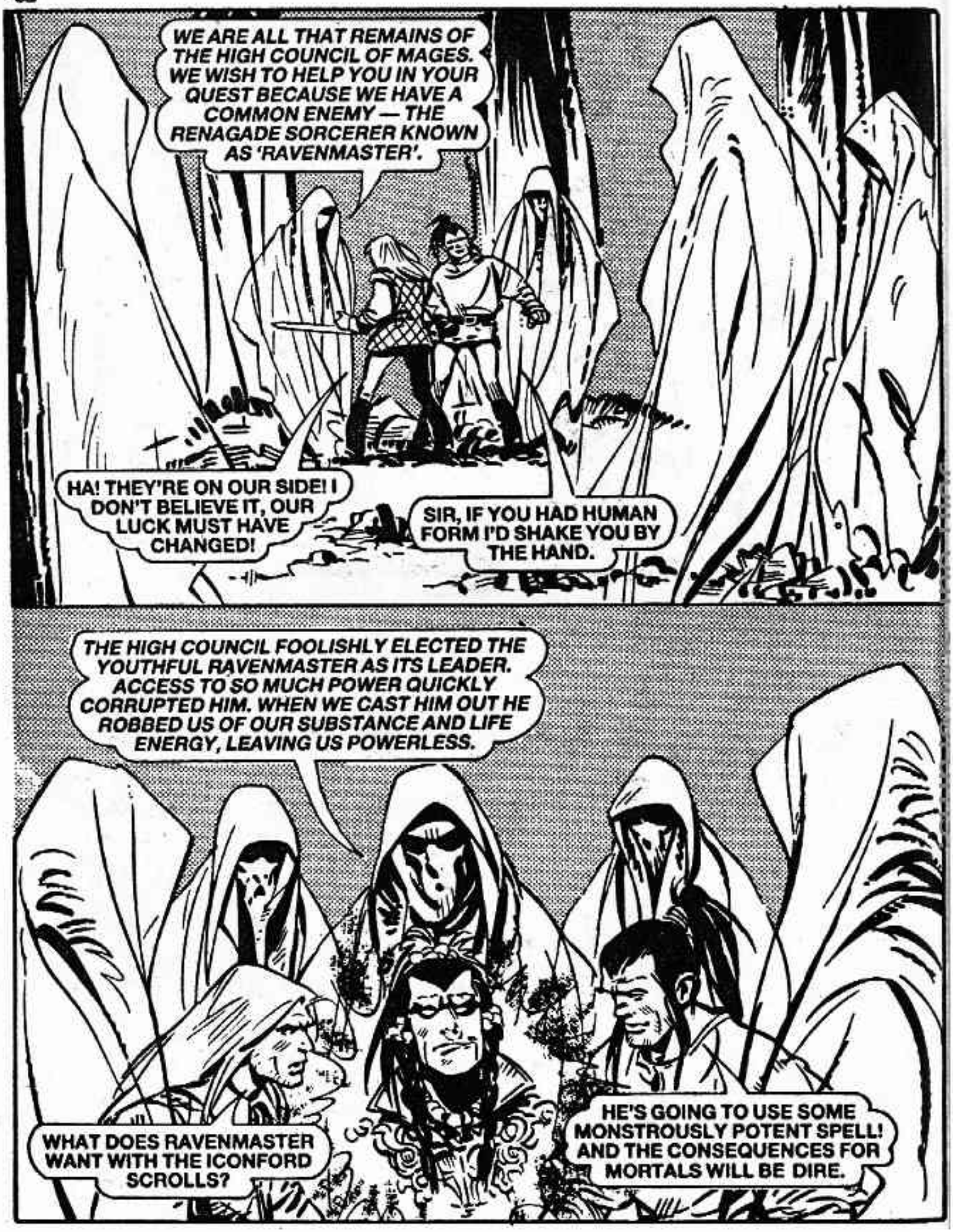
AAAH — THAT SMELLS GOOD!
THE OCCASION WHEN DINNER ARRIVES ON THE HOOF AND OF ITS OWN ACCORD ARE VERY FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. ENJOY IT!

AFTER THE MEAL WAS FINISHED, TEAL TOOK THE FIRST WATCH.
DON'T FORGET TO KEEP THE FIRE WELL FED AND THE SWORD IN YOUR HAND.

OF ALL THE ADVENTURES I'VE BEEN ON WITH ROMIC THIS ONE HAS TO BE THE STRANGEST, BUT I'VE AN AWFUL FEELING OF DARK FINALITY ABOUT IT — AS IF THESE ARE OUR LAST HOURS TOGETHER.

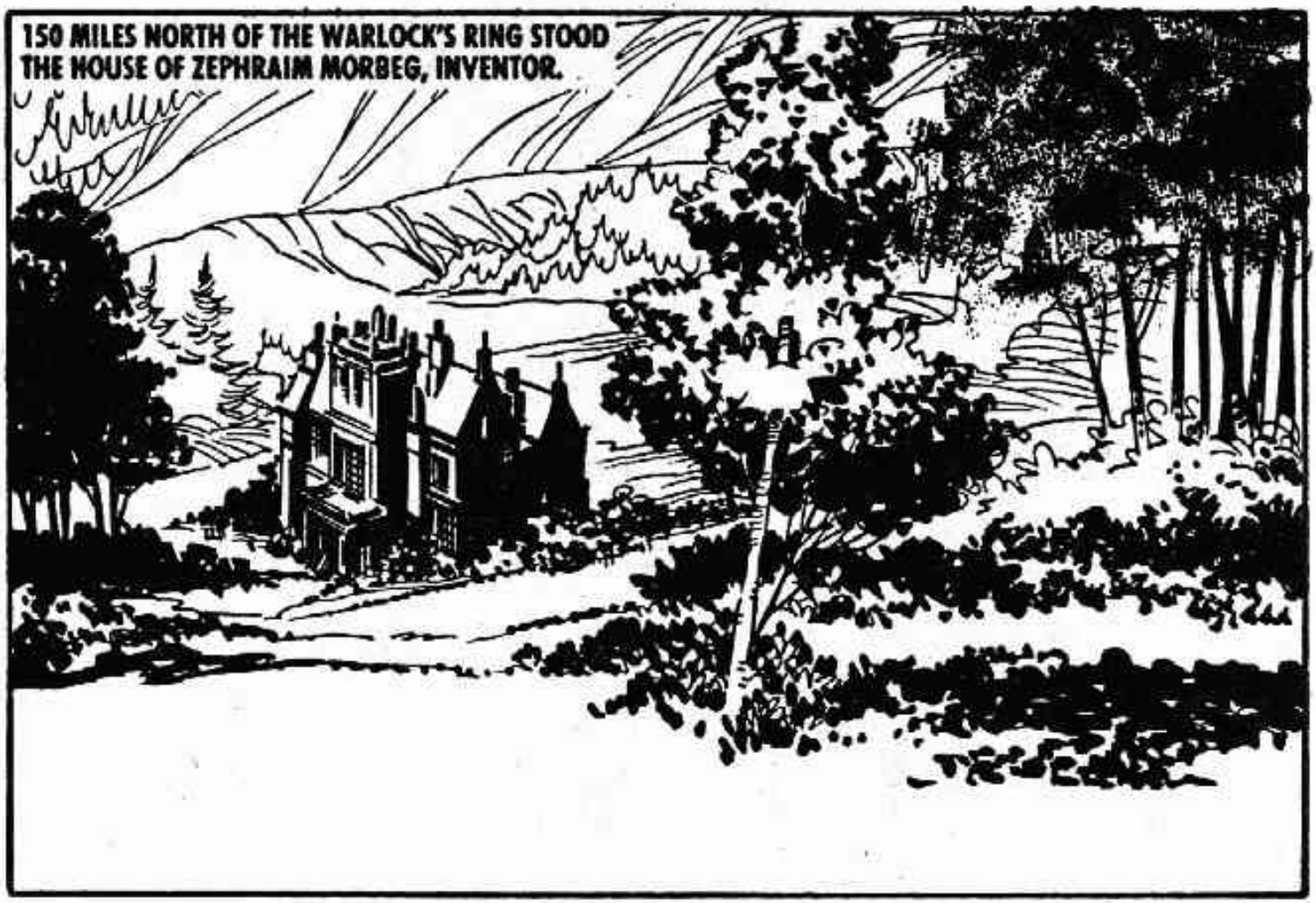
TEAL . . . TEAL!
HOLY . . . YEARGH!

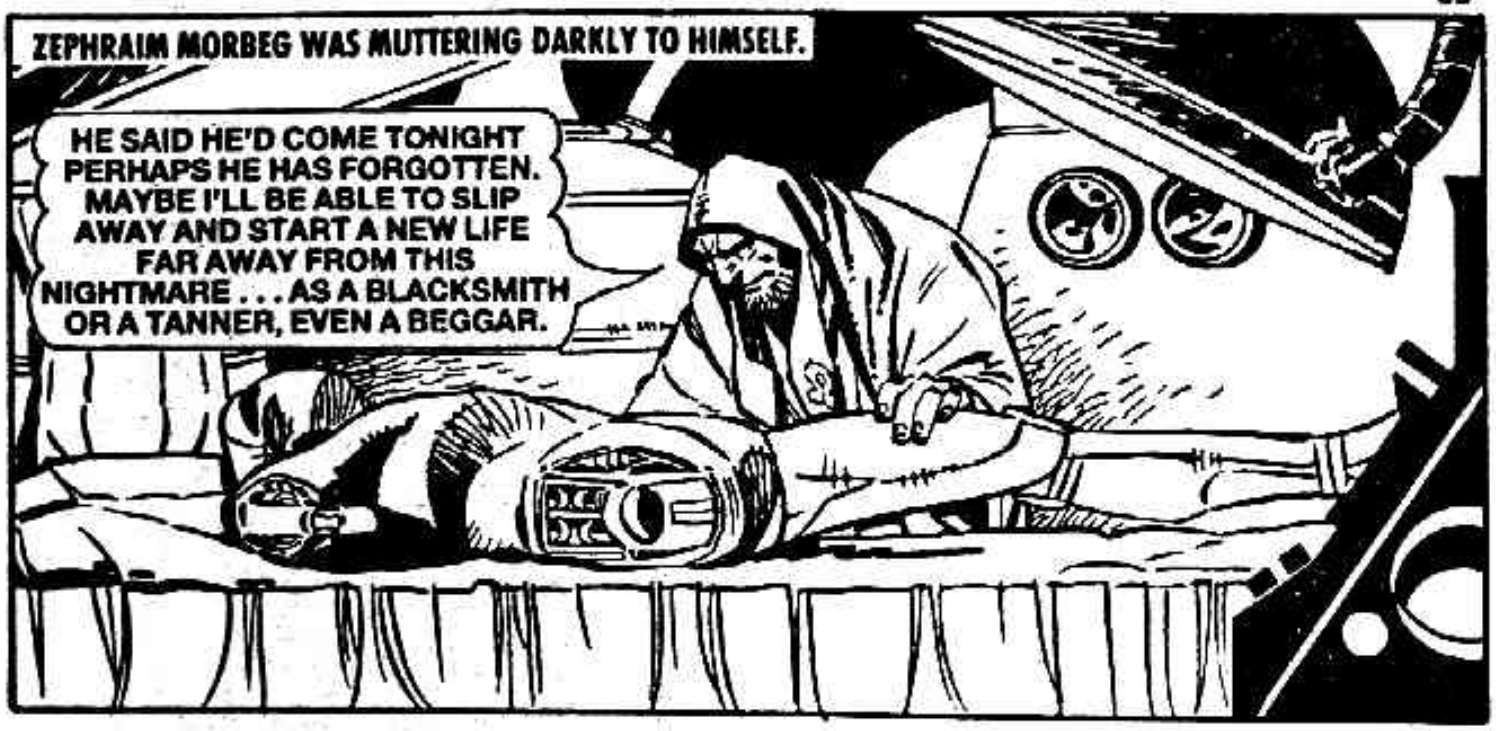
ROMIC! WAKE UP AND GET THAT ARMOUR ON OR WE'RE DEAD!
WHAT ON EARTH . . . ?
ROMIC REAPSILVER, TEAL THE BARD . . . WE MEAN YOU NO HARM . . .


WE ARE ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE HIGH COUNCIL OF MAGES. WE WISH TO HELP YOU IN YOUR QUEST BECAUSE WE HAVE A COMMON ENEMY — THE RENAGADE SORCERER KNOWN AS 'RAVENMASTER'.
HA! THEY'RE ON OUR SIDE! I DON'T BELIEVE IT, OUR LUCK MUST HAVE CHANGED!
SIR, IF YOU HAD HUMAN FORM I'D SHAKE YOU BY THE HAND.
THE HIGH COUNCIL FOOLISHLY ELECTED THE YOUTHFUL RAVENMASTER AS ITS LEADER. ACCESS TO SO MUCH POWER QUICKLY CORRUPTED HIM. WHEN WE CAST HIM OUT HE ROBBED US OF OUR SUBSTANCE AND LIFE ENERGY, LEAVING US POWERLESS.
WHAT DOES RAVENMASTER WANT WITH THE ICONFORD SCROLLS?
HE'S GOING TO USE SOME MONSTROUSLY POTENT SPELL! AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MORTALS WILL BE DIRE.

CORRECT, ROMIC, BUT THE ENORMITY OF HIS EVIL MAY SURPRISE EVEN YOU. RAVENMASTER PLANS TO REKINDLE THE SOUL-FLAME OF THE NETHER GOD, THANOCTIS — IN SHORT, HE INTENDS TO AWAKEN AND ENSLAVE A GOD.
BUT WITH ALL THAT POWER AT HIS DISPOSAL HE STILL NEEDS A DOORWAY TO THE NETHERWORLD. HE IS MOST LIKELY TO TRY TO GAIN THIS BY FREEING HIS SISTER FROM HER INCARCERATION IN THE CASTLE ON BEDLAM ISLE.
HIS SISTER IS A WEAVEWITCH — SHE HAS THE NATURAL, BUT ILL-CONTROLLED ABILITY TO TEAR APART THE WARP AND WEFT OF REALITY, CREATING INTER-DIMENSIONAL PORTALS.
OUR ADVICE TO YOU IS TO HEAD DIRECTLY TO BEDLAM ISLE. HE HAS MANY PREPARATIONS TO COMPLETE BEFORE HE CAN MAKE THE ATTACK ON THE CASTLE.

THE COAST IS WITHIN SPITTING DISTANCE. WE COULD BUILD A RAFT AND TRAVEL THROUGH THE BARRAMEL STRAITS. A HAZARDOUS JOURNEY, BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE.
I DON'T LIKE IT. RAVENMASTER FORESAW THAT HE'D BE FOLLOWED. THE GLYPH AT THE RAVINE PROVES THAT. I'VE A TERRIBLE FEELING THAT WE'RE JUST STROLLING INTO THE JAWS OF A RABID WOLF.


150 MILES NORTH OF THE WARLOCK'S RING STOOD THE HOUSE OF ZEPHRAIM MORBEG, INVENTOR.


ZEPHRAIM MORBEG WAS MUTTERING DARKLY TO HIMSELF.
HE SAID HE'D COME TONIGHT PERHAPS HE HAS FORGOTTEN. MAYBE I'LL BE ABLE TO SLIP AWAY AND START A NEW LIFE FAR AWAY FROM THIS NIGHTMARE . . . AS A BLACKSMITH OR A TANNER, EVEN A BEGGAR.

HE WASN'T THERE, AND THEN HE WAS—
DO NOT EVEN CONSIDER TRYING TO ESCAPE ME, FOR MY REVENGE WOULD BE TOO DREADFUL TO CONTEMPLATE.
WHAT A FRIGHTI ES . . . ESCAPE . . . WHY NO! THE WAR MANNEQUINS THAT YOU REQUIRE ARE ALL BUT COMPLETE.

AS YOU CAN SEE, I HAVE WORKED DAY AND NIGHT. EACH ONE HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN AND IS LETHAL.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL. IT IS A MOST JOYOUS DAY FOR YOU, ZEPHRAIM. YOU HAVE KEPT YOUR PART OF THE BARGAIN . . .

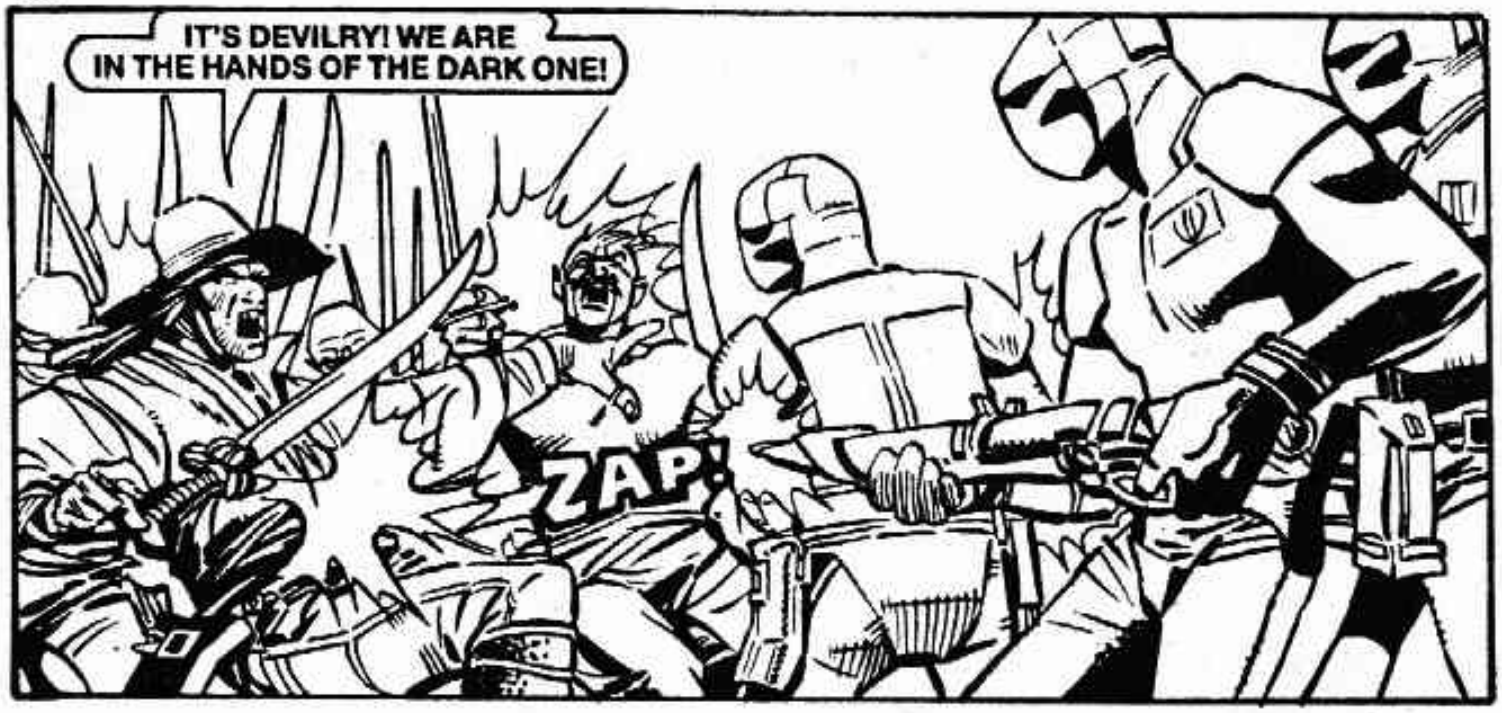
ZEPHRAIM OPENED A HEAVY DOOR.
. . . AND SO I WILL SHORTLY TRANSFORM YOUR WIFE AND DAUGHTER BACK INTO THEIR TRUE FORMS, BUT FIRST A TEST.
TEST?

AND WITH THE UTTERING OF THE ANCIENT PRIMAL TONGUE, FIGURES FROM THE PAST MATERIALSIED.

I THOUGHT PERHAPS SOME LASCAR SAILORS FROM THE BUCCANEER WARS WOULD DO — *KEQKRIM REVORRI LASCARI UDIMSHA!*

HE HAS GROWN MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER.

MANNEQUINS, DEFEND US!


IT'S DEVILRY! WE ARE IN THE HANDS OF THE DARK ONE!
ZAP!

RELENTLESS, UNSTOPPABLE, AND WITHOUT REMORSE . . . ALL OF THE QUALITIES THAT I ADMIRE.

TELL ME, GREAT ONE. WITH ALL THE POWER THAT YOU WIELD, WHY DO YOU NEED THESE TOYS?
MY POWER IS BASED ENTIRELY ON MAGIC, AND THAT HAS ONE DRAWBACK — SPELLS NEVER HAVE THEIR DESIRED EFFECT IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE INSANE. THEIR CHAOTIC THOUGHTS CONFUSE AND REDIRECT THE ENERGY.

MIGHT . . . I HAVE MY REWARD NOW, SIR?
I'M AFRAID NO. I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. I LOATHE YOU AND WHAT YOU REPRESENT. SCIENCE IS THE CURSE OF THE PEOPLE. SORCERY MUST RULE, AND WILL RULE.

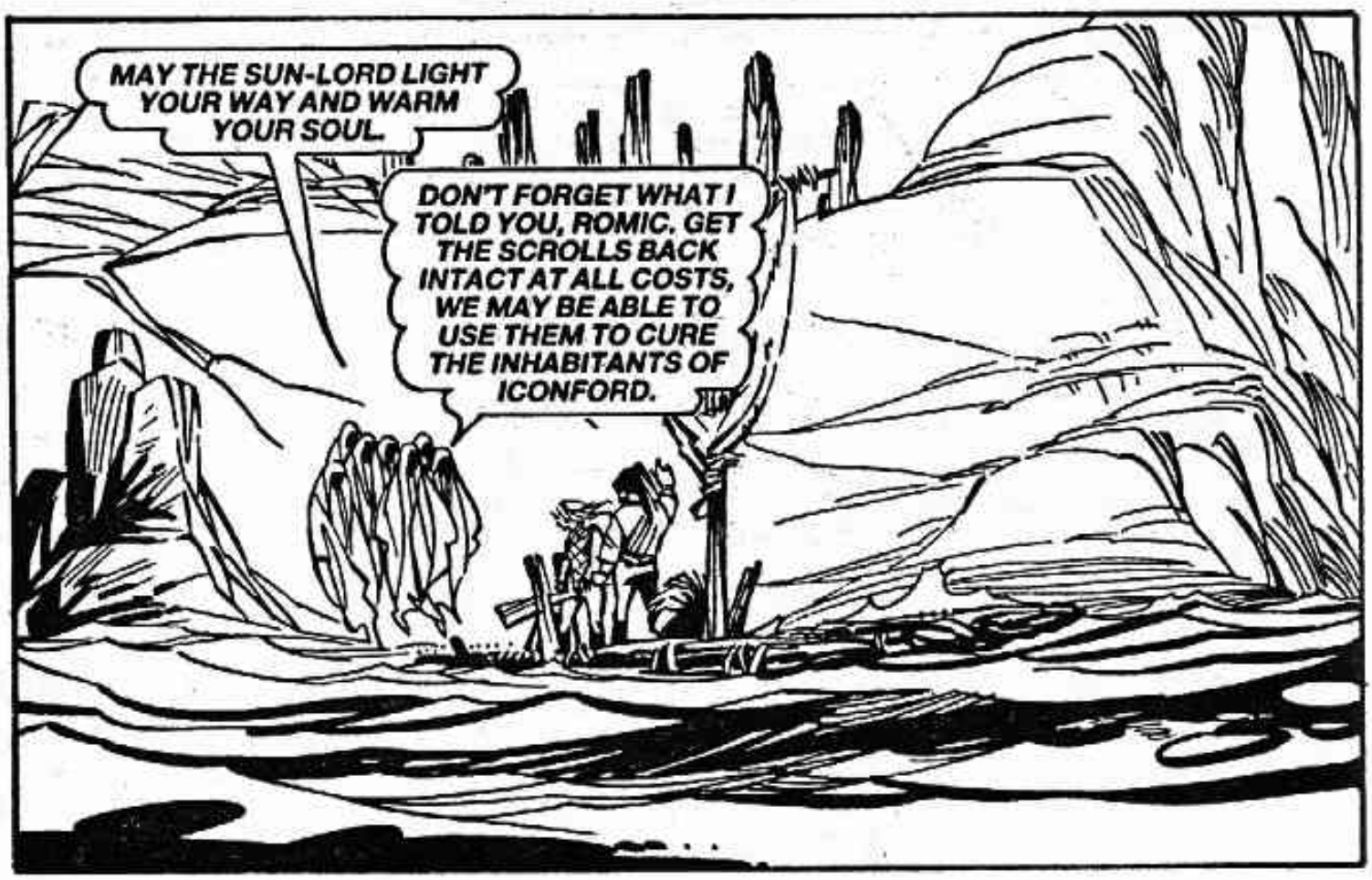
SO YOU MUST PERISH!
NO! PLEASE, LORD! I'VE BEEN LOYAL! AAAAARGH!

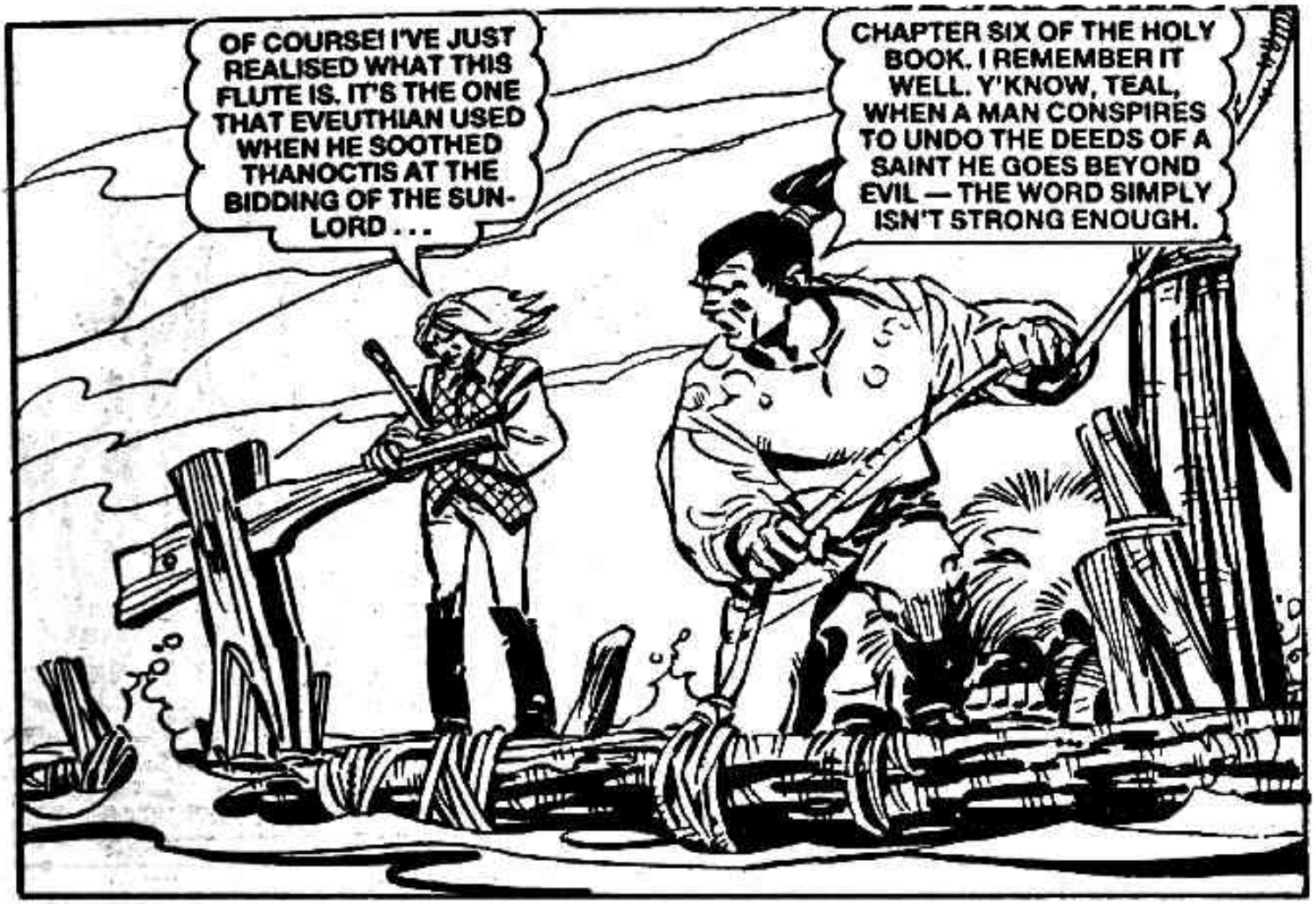
NOW I MUST GO!

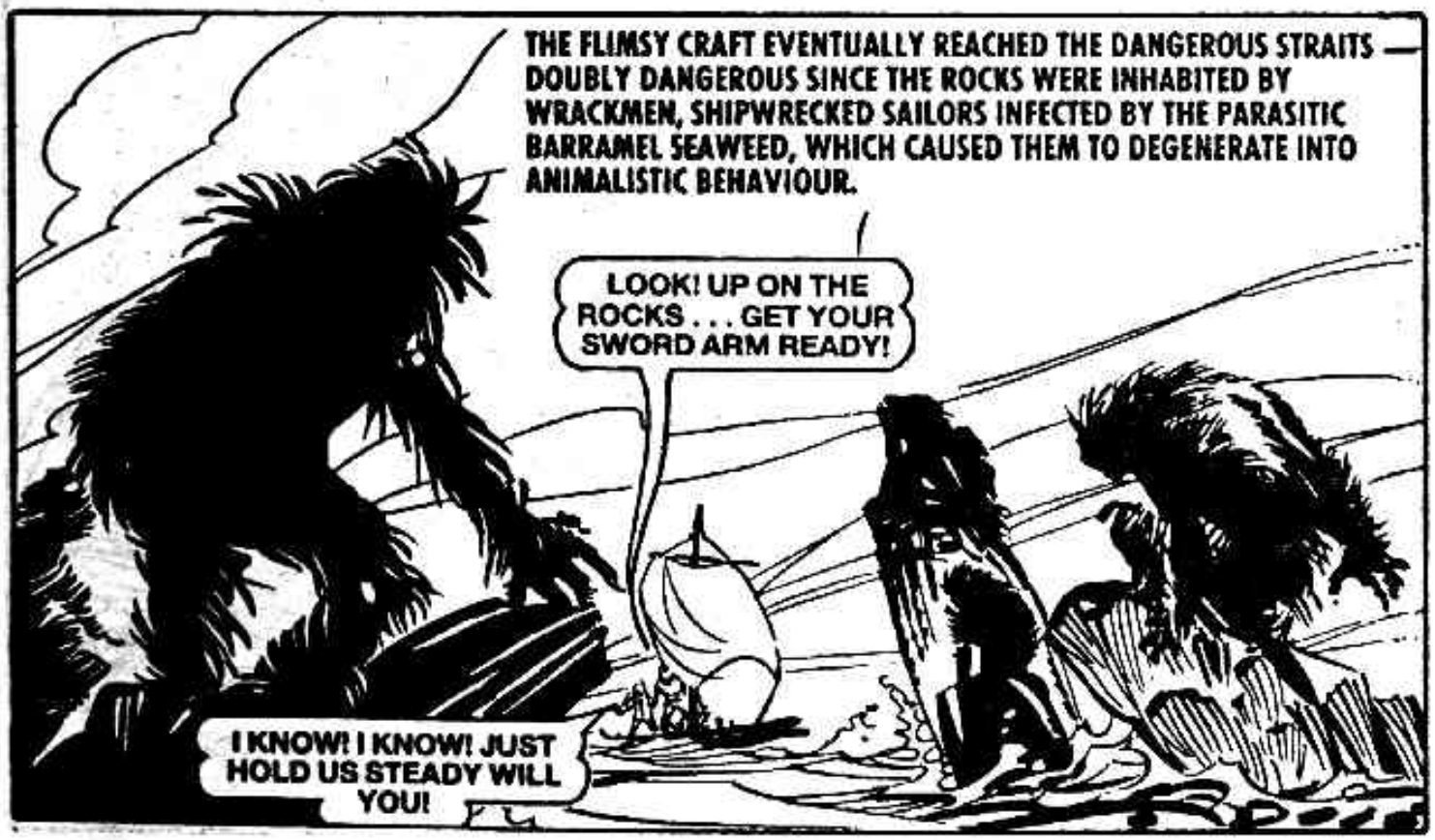
MEANWHILE, FAR AWAY —
NO! NO! NO! NO! ALL OF THE HOLLOW LOGS ARE PUT ON THE OUTSIDE FOR BUOYANCY. YOU'RE MORE HINDRANCE THAN HELP, TEAL.
I'M SORRY, BUT I COULD HAVE SWORN . . .
TEAL, WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK TO THE RING? I BELIEVE THE BRETHREN HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU!

MY LORDS? YOU HAVE SOMETHING FOR ME?
YES, TEAL. FEEL INSIDE THE CREVICE OF THE HEEL STONE AND REMOVE WHAT WAS PLACED THERE AN AGE AGO.

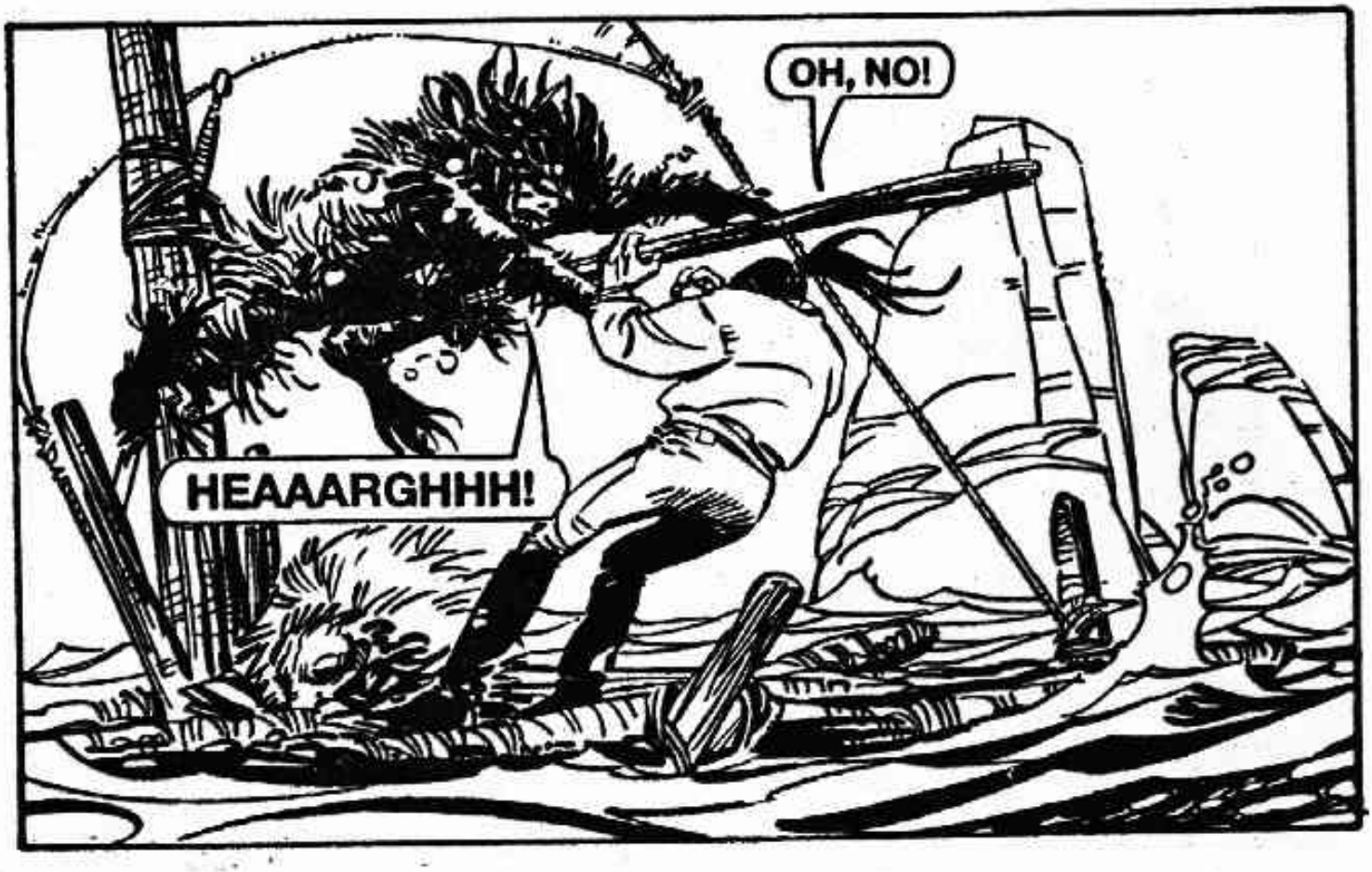
A FLUTE! A SILVER FLUTE! IS IT MAGICAL AS WELL?
HIGHLY MAGICAL! IT OFFERS PROTECTION AGAINST RAVENMASTER'S MAGIC.


MAY THE SUN-LORD LIGHT YOUR WAY AND WARM YOUR SOUL.
DON'T FORGET WHAT I TOLD YOU, ROMIC. GET THE SCROLLS BACK INTACT AT ALL COSTS, WE MAY BE ABLE TO USE THEM TO CURE THE INHABITANTS OF ICONFORD.


OF COURSE! I'VE JUST REALISED WHAT THIS FLUTE IS. IT'S THE ONE THAT EVEUTHIAN USED WHEN HE SOOTHED THANOCTIS AT THE BIDDING OF THE SUN-LORD . . .
CHAPTER SIX OF THE HOLY BOOK. I REMEMBER IT WELL. Y'KNOW, TEAL, WHEN A MAN CONSPIRES TO UNDO THE DEEDS OF A SAINT HE GOES BEYOND EVIL — THE WORD SIMPLY ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH.


THE FLIMSY CRAFT EVENTUALLY REACHED THE DANGEROUS STRAITS — DOUBLY DANGEROUS SINCE THE ROCKS WERE INHABITED BY WRACKMEN, SHIPWRECKED SAILORS INFECTED BY THE PARASITIC BARRAMEL SEAWEED, WHICH CAUSED THEM TO DEGENERATE INTO ANIMALISTIC BEHAVIOUR.
LOOK! UP ON THE ROCKS . . . GET YOUR SWORD ARM READY!
I KNOW! I KNOW! JUST HOLD US STEADY WILL YOU!

WATCH HIM!
CALM DOWN! I SEE THE BRUTE!

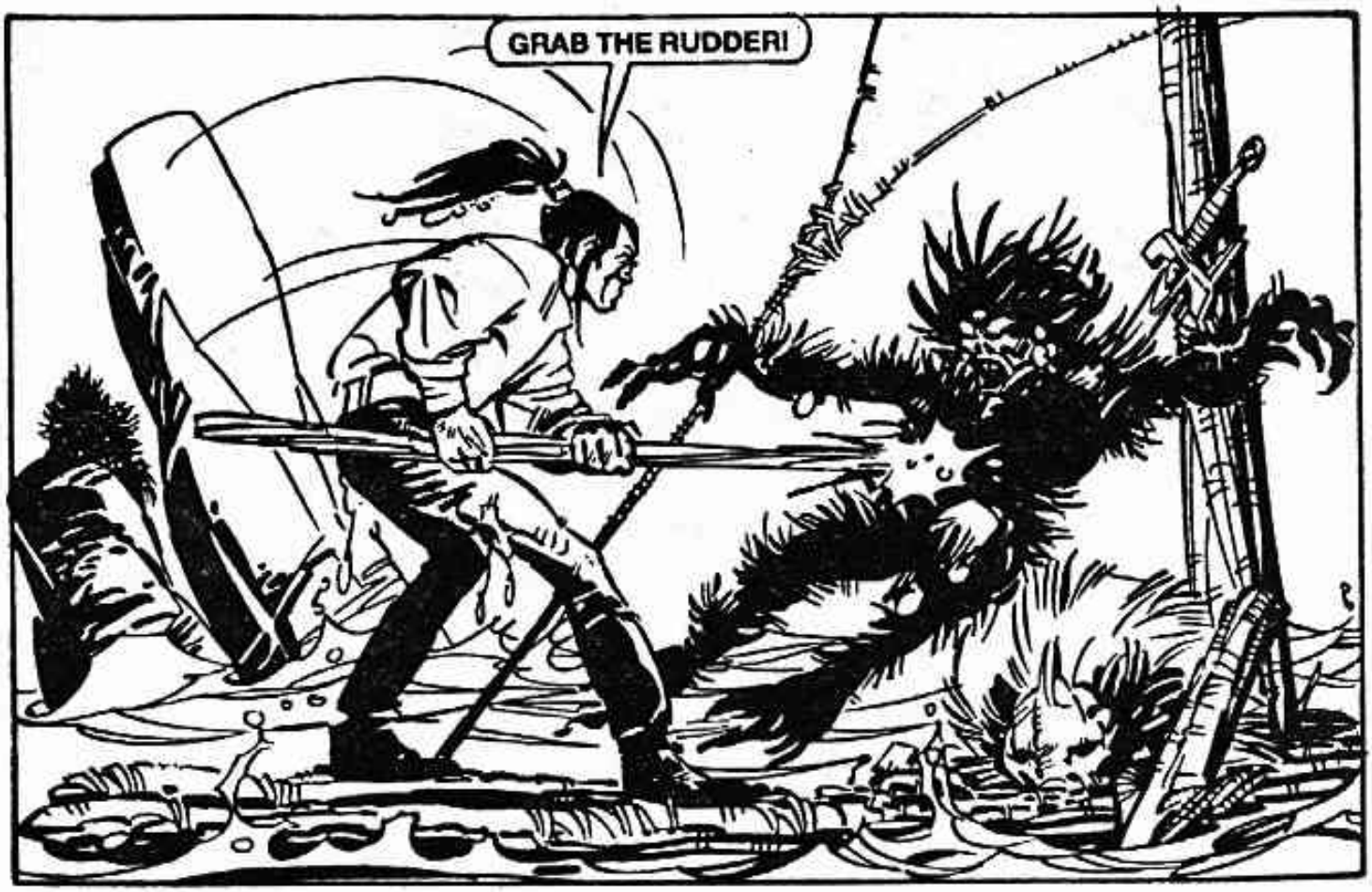

OH, NO!
HEAAARGHHH!

ROMIC PLUNGED OVERBOARD AND INTO THE ICY WATERS —

WELL, ROMIC, OLD SON, THERE'S NO GETTING OUT OF THIS ONE. IT LOOKS LIKE ITS TIME FOR MY ALL TOO SHORT LIFE TO FLASH BEFORE MY EYES.

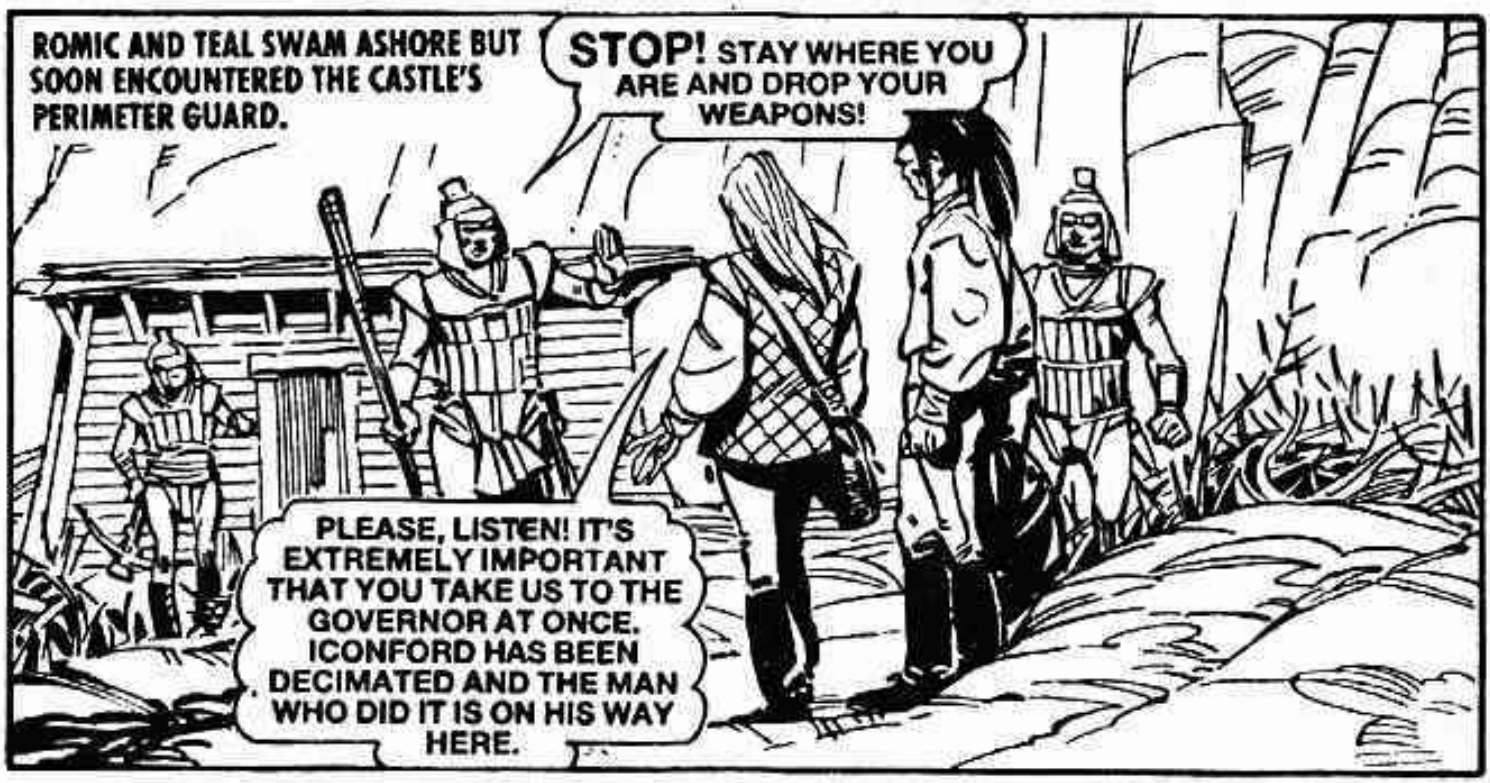
AH . . . THE OLD REAPSILVER LUCK IS STILL GOOD . . . NEVER LOOK A GIFT SHARK IN THE MOUTH.

YOU TOOK YOUR TIME DIDN'T YOU?
AIR!


GRAB THE RUDDER!

TOO LATE!

FOR HOURS THEY CLUNG TO A LOG AS THE CURRENT TOOK THEM ALONG.
WE'VE ARRIVED!
ARE WE IN TIME? OR DOES RAVENMASTER HOLD THANOCTIS ON A LEASH?

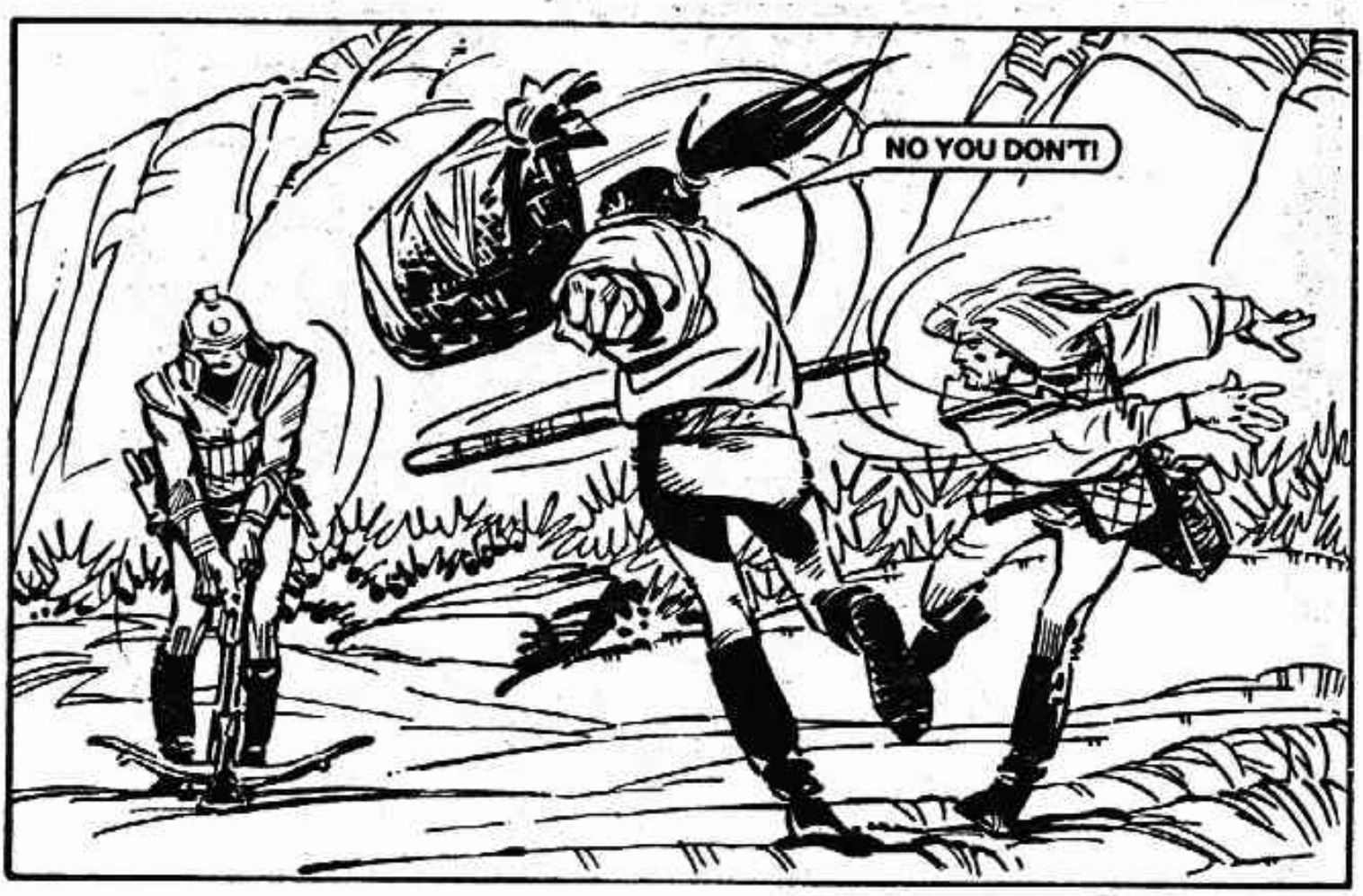

ROMIC AND TEAL SWAM ASHORE BUT SOON ENCOUNTERED THE CASTLE'S PERIMETER GUARD.
STOP! STAY WHERE YOU ARE AND DROP YOUR WEAPONS!
PLEASE, LISTEN! IT'S EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU TAKE US TO THE GOVERNOR AT ONCE. ICONFORD HAS BEEN DECIMATED AND THE MAN WHO DID IT IS ON HIS WAY HERE.

YOUR WORDS POISON THE AIR!
TEAL! BY THE SUN-LORD, I'LL MAKE YOU REGRET THAT!

QUIET!

IF THAT WAS THE HARDEST BLOW YOU COULD MUSTER, THEN TRULY YOU HAVE MY SYMPATHIES.

THAT'S WHAT I CALL A BLOW!


NO YOU DON'T!

DON'T WAIT FOR ME! GET UP THERE NOW WHILE I PUT THE ARMOUR ON. AND, TEAL, IF THERE'S NO OTHER OPTION — KILL HIS SISTER.
I'M AFRAID IT'S AGAINST MY CODE TO HARM WOMEN. LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, HE MAY NOT ARRIVE FOR HOURS.

WHAT DOES HE SUPPOSE IS MORE IMPORTANT, THE BARD CODE OF CHIVALRY, OR THE FUTURE OF THE SEVEN REALMS? I FOR ONE WOULD RATHER NOT SEE THANOCTIS DROOLING OVER US, AND CONSUMING WHOLE CITIES THE WAY HE DID IN ANCIENT TIMES.
HE MEANT IT! HE REALLY EXPECTED ME TO AGREE TO THE MURDER OF A WOMAN. SOMETIMES I THINK I DON'T KNOW HIM AT ALL.

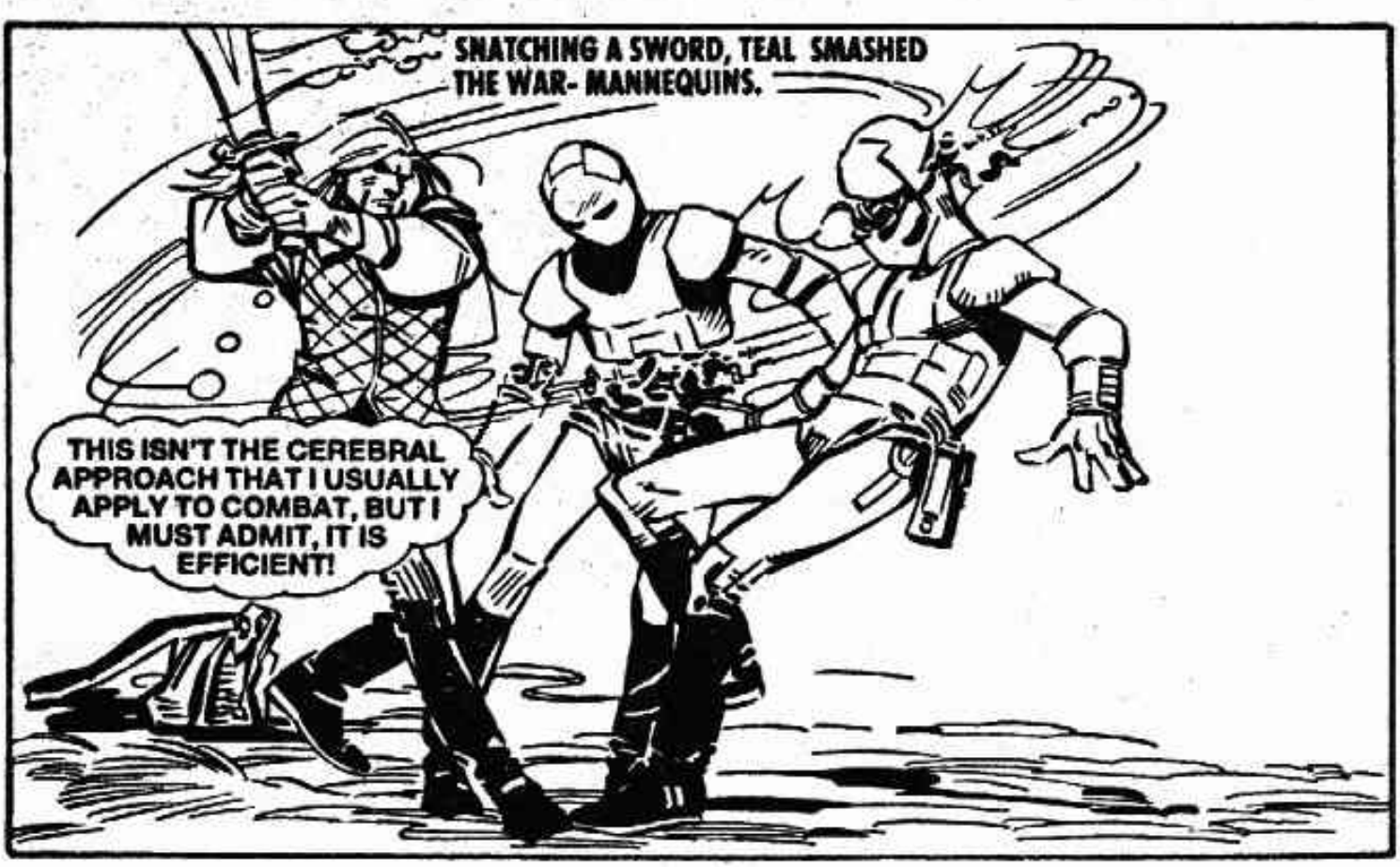
THE GUARD WOULD NOT LET HIM PASS —
WELL, I FIND IT VERY STRANGE THAT YOU'RE DISPLAYING THIS ATTITUDE. THE GUARDS ON THE BEACH WERE VERY HELPFUL AND UNDERSTANDING.
THAT'S AS MAY BE, BUT YOU'LL . . .

I CANNOT WAIT!

EVEN AS TEAL ENTERED THE COURTYARD RAVENMASTER AND HIS MANNEQUINS MATERIALISED.
I AM PAIN AND SUFFERING MADE FLESH, BUT YOU MAY CALL ME RAVENMASTER.
URGGGGH!

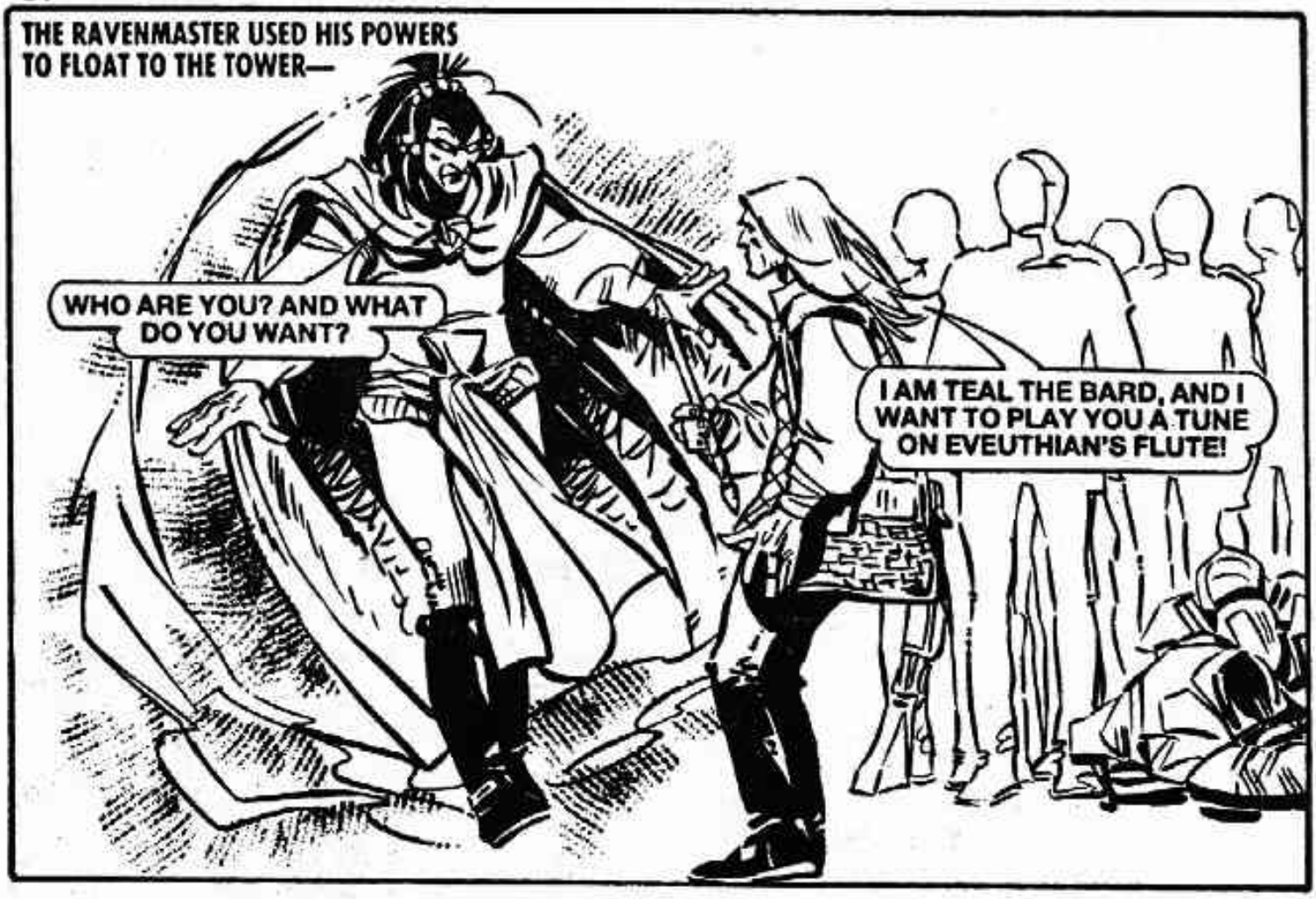
THEY'RE NOT HUMAN! THERE'S NO ONE INSIDE THESE CASTINGS!

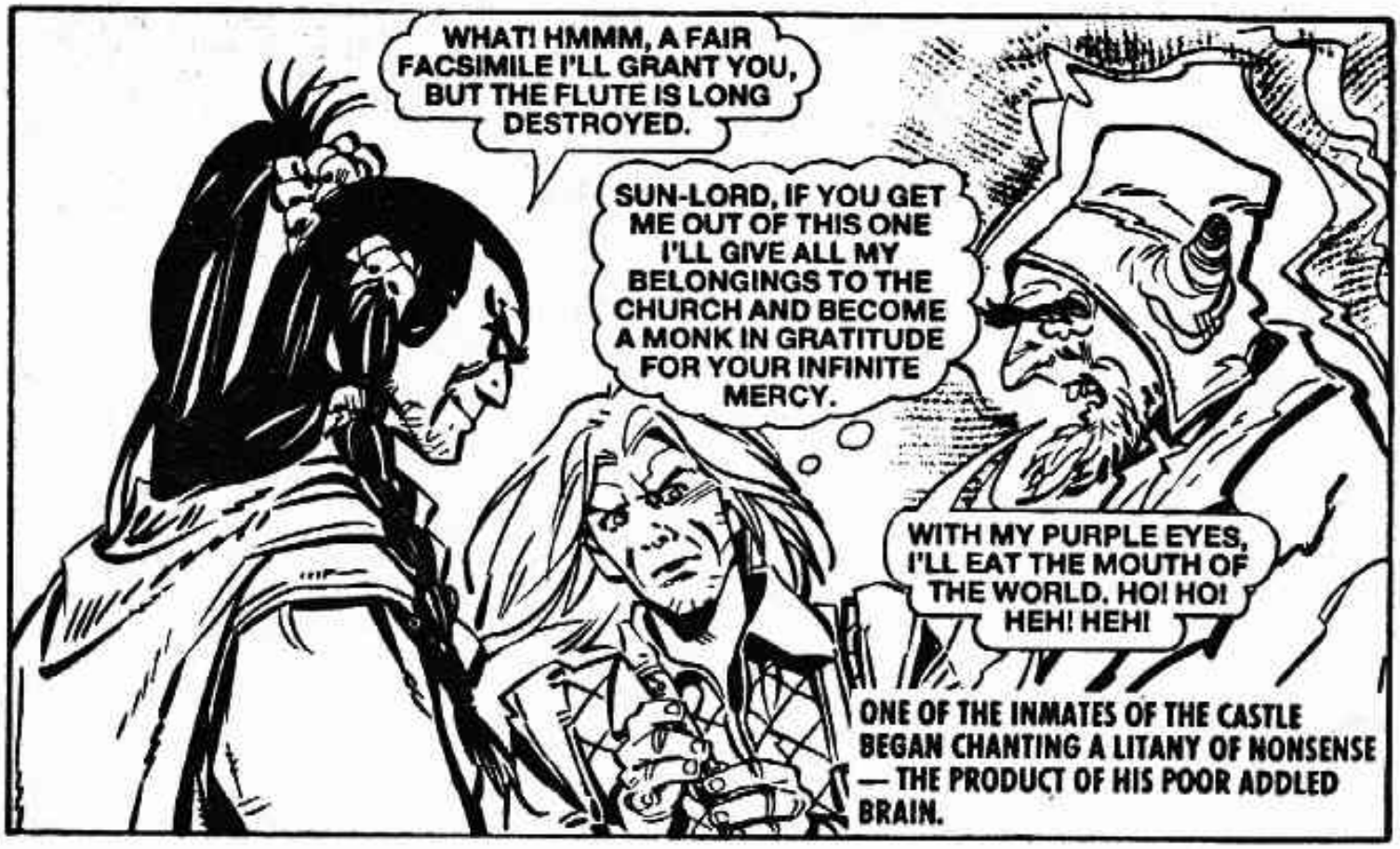
TWO MANNEQUINS DRAGGED TEAL TO HIS FEET, AND TEAL REACTED ANGRILY.
UNHHHH!


SNATCHING A SWORD, TEAL SMASHED THE WAR- MANNEQUINS.
THIS ISN'T THE CEREBRAL APPROACH THAT I USUALLY APPLY TO COMBAT, BUT I MUST ADMIT, IT IS EFFICIENT!

CURSED THINGS! WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF NEXT?

TEAL FOLLOWED RAVENMASTER'S TRAIL OF DEATH.
WHERE IS THE CELL OF AHRILA GEILAN?
THE WEAVEWITCH? IT'S AT THE TOP OF THIS TOWER.


THE RAVENMASTER USED HIS POWERS TO FLOAT TO THE TOWER—
WHO ARE YOU? AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I AM TEAL THE BARD, AND I WANT TO PLAY YOU A TUNE ON EVEUTHIAN'S FLUTE!


WHAT! HMMM, A FAIR FACSIMILE I'LL GRANT YOU, BUT THE FLUTE IS LONG DESTROYED.
SUN-LORD, IF YOU GET ME OUT OF THIS ONE I'LL GIVE ALL MY BELONGINGS TO THE CHURCH AND BECOME A MONK IN GRATITUDE FOR YOUR INFINITE MERCY.
WITH MY PURPLE EYES, I'LL EAT THE MOUTH OF THE WORLD. HO! HO! HEH! HEH!
ONE OF THE INMATES OF THE CASTLE BEGAN CHANTING A LITANY OF NONSENSE — THE PRODUCT OF HIS POOR ADDLED BRAIN.

ACNOZI . . . PEROCHI . . . TIRABKNI . . .
HOW COULD I BE SO STUPID?
BUT THE SPELL MERELY BOUNCED FROM TEAL, CONFUSED BY THE INCOHERENT THOUGHTS OF THE DEMENTED MAN.

RAVENMASTER'S EVIL INCANTATION PETERED OUT WITH NO EFFECT.
RELEASING MAGIC IN A MADHOUSE! HOW VULGAR AND AMATEURISH OF ME.
WAIT FOR MY TUNE!

AHRILA!

LORKOS, MY BROTHER, IS IT REALLY YOU? AFTER ALL THESE YEARS I'D GIVEN UP HOPE.
I HAVE RETURNED TO FULFIL MY PROMISE, AHRILA. I AM HERE TO FREE YOU FOR EVER. YOUR PRESENCE IN THIS DREADFUL PLACE HAS BEEN LIKE AN ARROW IN MY SIDE. YOU ARE THE ONLY BEING IN THIS WORLD THAT I LOVE . . .

YOU LOVE NO ONE! DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, AHRILA. HE'S A MASS MURDERER. HE DOESN'T CARE WHETHER YOU LIVE OR DIE. HE JUST NEEDS YOU SO HE CAN GAIN MORE POWER.
LORKOS! WHO IS THIS MAN?
SOMEONE VERY NEAR THE END OF HIS LIFE.

URRKK!
PLEASE, DON'T HURT HIM!
SHUT UP! MAKE A WARPWAY TO MY DOMICILE! HURRY!

HELLO, RAVENMASTER. I'D LOVE TO HEAR HOW YOU'RE GOING TO DEFEND YOURSELF AGAINST ME, SINCE IT'S COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT SPELLS DON'T WORK PROPERLY ON BEDLAM ISLE.
EVEUTHIAN!? NO, IT IS MERELY A DECEPTION — SOME KNAVE DRESSED IN HIS ARMOUR. IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION . . .
WITH A DEFT GESTURE, AHRILA CREATED A WARPWAY.

MY SISTER'S ABILITY IS NATURAL, NOT MAGICAL,AND THUS UNAFFECTED. I WILL MAKE A STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL AND YOU WOULD BE VERY FOOLISH INDEED TO FOLLOW ME.

BUT ROMIC AND TEAL FOLLOWED.
HE WAS RIGHT! WE WERE FOOLISH TO COME HERE.
BUT, WHY THE NETHERWORLD, LORKOS?
IT'S A WHOLE NEW UNIVERSE! WE CAN LEAVE THIS REALITY BEHIND AND START AGAIN. THERE MY POWERS SHALL GROW EVEN MIGHTIER . . . I SHALL BE INVINCIBLE!

YOUR CONTINUING GOADING OF ME IS AKIN TO SUICIDE. RAVENS! STRIP THEM TO THE BONE AND FEED THE FLESH TO YOUR YOUNG.
ROMIC, I'M SURE THAT I CAN CHARM THE RAVENS WITH THIS FLUTE. DON'T WORRY ABOUT PROTECTING ME, JUST STOP HIM FROM REACHING THANOCTIS.

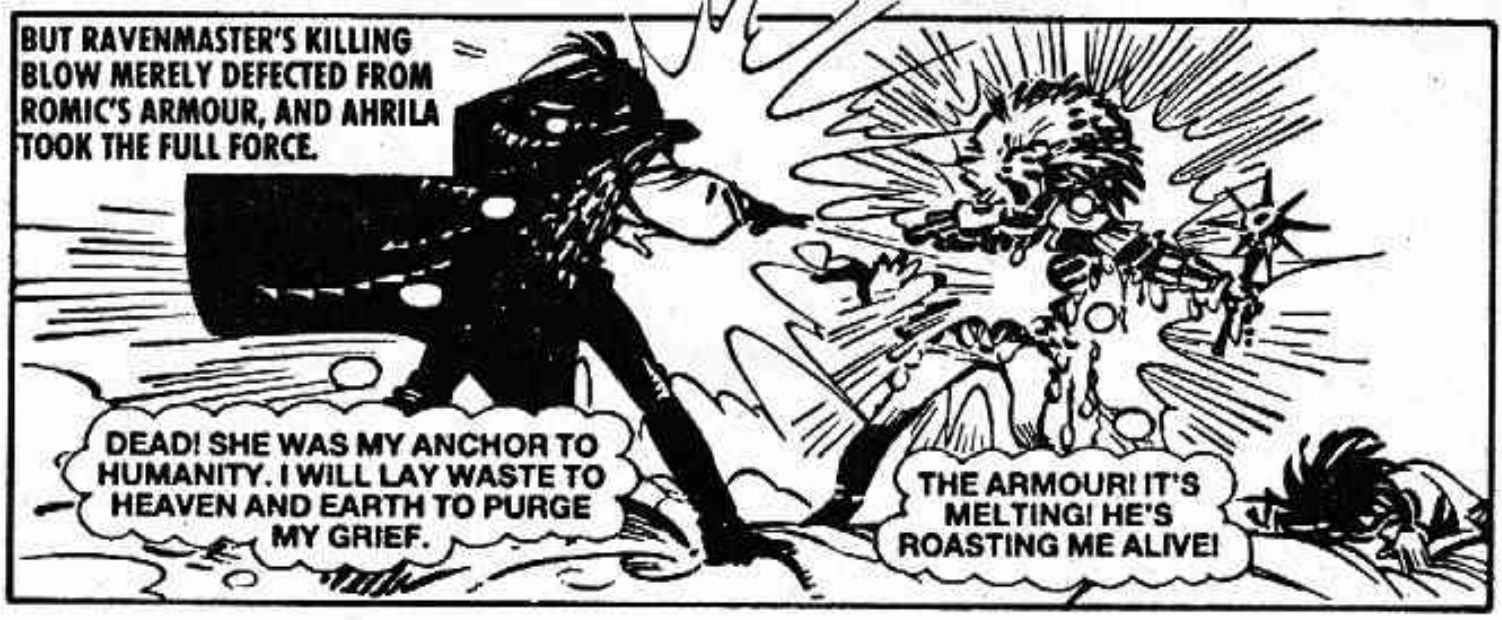
BUT TEAL WAS TOO CONFIDENT OF HIS ABILITY TO CHARM THE RAVENS.
IT'S NOT WORKING!

BUT TEAL NEVER STOOD A CHANCE—

I BEG YOU,WOMAN, DON'T FORCE ME TO KILL YOU — SEAL THIS DOORWAY TO . . . GOOD LORD! THANOCTIS . . .
MAGNIFICENT ISN'T HE? BEHOLD THE DIZZYING GEOMETRY OF ONE WHO CAME BEFORE THE SUN-LORD. SOON HE WILL BE MY SLAVE — THEN WOE BETIDE ANY MORTAL WHO STANDS IN MY WAY!
THE WARRIORS SPOKE THE TRUTH! WHAT HAVE I DONE?

GET OUT OF THE WAY!

UNHAND MY SISTER!


BUT RAVENMASTER'S KILLING BLOW MERELY DEFECTED FROM ROMIC'S ARMOUR, AND AHRILA TOOK THE FULL FORCE.
DEAD! SHE WAS MY ANCHOR TO HUMANITY. I WILL LAY WASTE TO HEAVEN AND EARTH TO PURGE MY GRIEF.
THE ARMOUR! IT'S MELTING! HE'S ROASTING ME ALIVE!

RAVENMASTER BEGAN RECITING THE SPELL THAT WOULD REKINDLE THE SOUL-FLAME OF THE NETHER GOD.
UQREN MORALISH ELOM SUBAL CTHENEUKA, BAAKELIM ELSHADOL KUBOS . . .
STILL ALIVE . . . SOMEHOW . . . SHOULDN'T BE . . . CAN FEEL THE SUIT TRYING TO HEAL ME . . . HOLD MY LIFE ESSENCE TOGETHER . . . IT WON'T SUCCEED. I'M TOO FAR GONE, BUT IT'S GIVEN ME AN EXTRA MOMENT . . .

ALL I NEED . . .
MEKT-UKI

AS HE DIED, SO THE LIFE ENERGY THAT RAVENMASTER STOLE LEFT HIM AND RETURNED TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNERS . . .

. . . THE HIGH COUNCIL OF MAGES.
THANOCTIS STILL SLEEPS, THE RAVENMASTER IS DEAD AND HIS PETS ARE NO LONGER A THREAT. THE GAME IS OVER, OUR PAWNS REACHED THE FAR SIDE OF THE BOARD . . . AND ACCORDING TO THE RULES THEY MAY BE REBORN AS ANY PIECE, KNIGHT, BISHOP, ROOK, EVEN MONARCH.
WE WILL OF COURSE RETURN THEIR LIVES TO THEM, BUT WHETHER OR NOT THEY FULFIL THE PROMISE THEY HAVE SHOWN IS ENTIRELY UP TO THEM. COME, LET US DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER AT ICONFORD. WE HAVE MANY DUTIES TO PERFORM THERE.

LET BONE, FLESH, SKIN, AND TENDON ALL BE HEALED.
LET THE LIFE-FORCE RE-ENTER THESE BODIES AND ANIMATE THEM, IN THE NAME OF THE SUN-LORD.
THIS LOOKS REMARKABLY LIKE THE NAVE OF ICONFORD CATHEDRAL.
I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD . . . STILL, I'M NOT COMPLAINING!
IT WAS THE WORK OF THESE GENTLEMEN. THEY BROUGHT BACK THE SCROLLS AND MADE EVERYTHING PERFECT. ICONFORD IS PURIFIED — THE MADNESS GONE.

AND KYRA?
ABLE TO SEE AGAIN!
WELL, IF THAT DOESN'T REQUIRE A CELEBRATORY FLAGON OF CIDER, I DON'T KNOW WHAT DOES.

AT KYRA'S HOSTELRY—
GENTLEFOLK, PLEASE WELCOME THE GREATEST HEROES OF THE SEVEN REALMS, ROMIC REAPSILVER AND TEAL THE BARD.
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, KYRA.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO, THOUGH I MUST ADMIT YOU'VE LOOKED BETTER.

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DON'T MISS

THIS MONTH'S OTHER ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURE

NOW ON SALE

RAVENMASTER

Ravens have been associated with death and destruction since time began. No one is quite sure why they gained this reputation, but when the Ravenmaster stalked the lands of old Earth, evil abounded. In his ceaseless quest for power and domination he annihilated an entire kingdom to secure the Iconford Scrolls . . . the most sacred and potent set of magical writings in the known lands. Drawn into this cauldron of evil were two old comrades-in-arms Romic, the warrior and Teal, the minstrel . . . drawn in because they chanced to survive the terrible death visited upon Iconford by the Ravenmaster.